

STORIES from the
NEW TESTAMENT
for CHILDREN: By
Elsa Barker : :





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**STORIES FROM THE NEW
TESTAMENT FOR CHILDREN**



The Teaching of Jesus

Stories from the New Testament

FOR CHILDREN

BY

ELSA BARKER

AUTHOR OF "THE SON OF MARY BETHEL," AND "THE FROZEN GRAIL
AND OTHER POEMS"



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TO
MY LITTLE FRIEND
PAUL EUGENE LLOYD

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Stories from the New Testament for Children

CHAPTER I

THE BABY IN THE STABLE

A long time ago, on the other side of the world, there lived a beautiful young girl whose name was Mary. She had no brothers or sisters to play with, and her parents were quite old when she was born. They were called simply Joachim and Anna, for in those days people did not have surnames as we have now. Long afterward Anna was called a great saint, and millions of men and women still honour her name—just because she was the mother of the girl Mary, whose life was so beautiful that even now, after nearly two thousand years, she is loved by the whole world. Her pictures are in half the Christian churches; and to this day many persons, when they pray to God, ask Him to answer their prayers and to give them what they want, “for Mary’s sake.”

But when she was a young girl no one dreamed of all the strange and sad and wonderful things that were going to happen to her in after years. She was much like the other girls in that far-away country, except perhaps that she was lovelier to look at, more serious and thoughtful, and kinder than the others were to poor people and to the old.

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If you close your eyes, perhaps you can see her in imagination, in her little red dress with a blue cape round her shoulders, going to the village well with a brown earthen jar to draw water for her mother to use in their little home. For in those days each family did not have a well of their own, or draw their water from a faucet in the house, as we do; but they had a large public well, or fountain, where all the women went for water. Sometimes, when they were not too busy, the girls and women would stand a long time together at the well, and tell each other all the happenings of the day and the gossip of the neighbouring villages. They had no newspapers then, and the people had to learn from one another what was going on here and there.

And the little Mary used to help her mother with the spinning and the weaving, for they made all their own clothes, and usually the cloth of which the clothes were made. We may be sure, from what we learn of her in after life, that no girl in the village could weave a smoother cloth than hers, or sew a straighter seam. So she lived, quietly and happily like any other girl, until she had grown to be as tall as her mother, and was a young woman and no longer a little girl.

Now these people who lived in Judæa and Galilee were Jews, a very ancient race whose long history you can read in the Old Testament of the Bible; and for thousands of years they had suffered a great deal from the people of other nations, who had made wars against them, and had taken away many things which really belonged to the Jews, and had made them pay taxes for the support of foreign governments and kings. And the hearts of the Jews were sad, for they knew how many ages their forefathers had been free and independent; and they did not like being ruled by foreign kings, whose

fathers had been wild people of the woods. The Jews were very proud of their ancient race, and they treasured their old books and histories which told the stories of their ancestors, Abraham and Moses, King David and King Solomon, and Elijah the great prophet.

Mary had learned from her father and mother, and from the other old men and women who often came in the evenings to sit in the house of Joachim and Anna, all the stories of her ancient race: proud stories of the times gone by when they were free; sad stories of the present time when they were ruled by the Romans, whose emperor lived in the great far-away city of Rome, in the land which is now called Italy. And she also heard from the old people how the great prophets, the wise men of the days gone by, had said that after a long time, when the Jews should be sadder and more enslaved than they had ever been before, God Himself, whom they called Jehovah, would come down to the earth and be born as a man, a Jew, and deliver the people. And the deliverer who was to come, the man who would be God Himself, they called the Messiah—which means the Christ.

All her life Mary had heard the old people talk about the Christ who was to come and make the Jewish people once more free. When she was alone she thought of it a great deal. And when she grew to be a young woman, as tall as her mother, she used to talk about it with her young friends; and they said among themselves that surely the happiest woman in all the world would be she who should become the mother of the future Christ. For then, as now, it was considered a beautiful and sacred thing to be a mother; and to be the mother of the Christ would be the most wonderful thing that could come to any woman.

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Sometimes, in the evening, she would go out and stand in the little path before her father's house, under the sky, and look up at the glittering stars, the very same stars which you see now when the nights are clear; for though the nations of the earth may rise and pass away, the stars have always been and always will be. They are eternal, like God; and, like Him, they seem to watch the people on the earth. And the stillness of the stars seemed to tell Mary and the other dwellers in Judæa and Galilee, as it tells us, to be patient when things go wrong, and to wait until God is ready to help us set them right. But when Mary was looking at the stars she used to think, more than at any other time, about the Christ who was to come, and about her who should be his mother. And sometimes she asked God that the time of his coming might be soon. But she never dared to ask God more than that.

Now there lived, not far from the home of Mary and her parents, a man named Joseph. He was a good man, some years older than Mary, and he was a carpenter. In those days and among the Jews of Galilee, people were not ashamed to work with their hands. They thought it honourable, as it really is now; and the carpenter was often the most respected man in the village. It was so with Joseph. And when he told the parents of Mary that he wished to marry their daughter, they were glad; for they knew that he would give her a good home and work hard for her, and that with him she would never lack the wool from which to weave the close red gown she liked so much to wear, and the full blue cape that kept her warm when the wind from the sea behind the hills blew cold over Galilee.

But as Mary was still very young, her mother, the good Anna who afterward was called a saint, thought it

better to wait yet a few months before giving her daughter in marriage to Joseph the carpenter.

Now when Mary realised that she would soon be married, she began to spin and weave more busily than before; and often, in the quiet afternoons, as she sat with her distaff in her hand, her thoughts went back to the stories she had heard about the Messiah, the Christ who would be born among the Jews, to make them good and to set them free. And as she mused thus alone at her peaceful work, she thought more and more about the happy woman, perhaps even then living somewhere in Galilee, a maiden like herself, who would, in the time which God should choose, become the mother of the Christ.

And one moonlight night in spring, after she had gone to bed, she lay awake a long time, looking at the rays of blue-grey moonlight which filtered into her chamber through the one small window at her head. In those days the people of Galilee did not sleep on beds of wood or iron, as we do, but on mats, which they spread out each night upon the floor. As Mary lay there, she thought about the Christ who was to come. And her heart was so full of love for the Jewish people, her friends who suffered so much and still must suffer more, that her eyes filled with tears, and she saw the rays of blue-grey moonlight through a veil of water. And she asked God, more fervently than she had ever asked before, that He would send the Christ soon, very soon, to save the Jewish people.

Suddenly her heart seemed to stand still, for there—in the centre of the little room and close beside her bed—she saw a great angel, one of those that watch forever near the throne of God, and sometimes come to earth to do God's errands, when He wants to speak with men in

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words which they can understand. The angel was all glittering white from head to feet, and behind his shoulders were great white wings, now folded and at rest, as he stood there in the middle of Mary's room, in the flood of blue-grey moonlight. And the angel's face was more beautiful than any face that Mary had ever seen before; it was whiter and lovelier than the lilies that blossomed beside the lake in Galilee. And the angel's eyes were deep, deep blue, like the sky after a rain, when the clouds are chased away and the sun comes out, and heaven and earth seem to be smiling at each other. And the angel smiled at Mary now.

But though the angel was so beautiful and seemed so kind, Mary was just a little afraid; for she had never before seen an angel, and she did not know of any one who had. She had read in the Bible how God's angels sometimes came to earth to talk with wise old men; but she was only a young girl—and so she was afraid.

Then the angel, still smiling, moved nearer to Mary, as she lay there on her little mat; he came so near that a fold of his white robe touched her hand, which was on the edge of the coverlet. And Mary was no more afraid, for she knew that the angel loved her; and though he was so tall and shining, she felt as if she had known him all her life.

The angel spoke to Mary, and what he said was more wonderful than any words that man or angel ever spoke before; for he told Mary that God had chosen *her* to be the mother of the Christ who was to come. He said that in a few short months she would hold him in her arms, a little baby, her own baby.

And the angel told Mary that God was pleased with her, and that she should name her baby Jesus; that he should be called God's son, and that there should never

be an end to the kingdom which he would establish on the earth.

When Mary had prayed to God that He would send Christ soon to the world, she had never dared to pray for this! She was so happy and so full of wonder at the message which the angel brought, that she forgot to thank him for bringing it. She could only whisper her gladness and her willingness to do anything God wanted; and she looked at the angel, and looked, and looked. She knew she was not dreaming, that she was wide awake. And she knew that the angel was real; though as he stood there in the blue-grey moonlight, his form, instead of casting a shadow behind him on the floor, cast a circle of radiance all around. He seemed to shine with his own light.

Then, after a little while, though she was still looking at the place where he had stood, she could not see him any longer. The angel had vanished. She did not even see him raise his broad white wings before he flew away. A moment before he had been there beside her, and now he was not there. But the whole room was filled with a delicious perfume, like the scent from a garden full of roses when the wind blows. Mary was so happy that she could not go to sleep all night; and when the grey dawn came in through the window, she was still lying there with her eyes wide open, looking at the spot where the mysterious visitor had stood.

The next day she could not spin or weave. When she took the earthen jar to the village well for water, the other girls who were there asked Mary what had happened to her, because she looked so beautiful and her eyes were shining so. But she did not tell them what had happened.

Now Mary had a cousin named Elizabeth, whom she

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much loved. Elizabeth was older than Mary; she was married, and lived with her husband in a village not far from Jerusalem. For many days Mary had not been able to think of anything but the great message which the angel had brought to her; and though she could not speak about it to the girls in Galilee, she wanted to tell her cousin Elizabeth that God had chosen her to be the mother of the Christ who was going to be born. It happened that some people she knew were going to Jerusalem about that time, and Mary went along with them. There were no railroads in those days, and they walked over the hills and through the valleys, stopping to rest at night in a tent which they carried with them on the back of a gentle, large-eyed mule.

When Mary reached her cousin's house, Elizabeth was very glad to see her. The two sat down together, hand in hand, and when Mary had told her cousin the wonderful news, Elizabeth said, "Blessed art thou among women"!

And Elizabeth told Mary how happy she was that the future mother of her Lord had come to visit her; and now, she said, all the great things which the prophets had foretold for the Jews would really happen.

Mary answered that she loved God, and wanted to be worthy of the gift which He was going to send her. It was because her heart was so full of inexpressible things that she spoke so simply.

She made her cousin a long visit, of about three months; and during all that time the two talked much together about the Christ who was coming to Mary as a little baby, and whose name should be called Jesus. And Mary told Elizabeth all about Joseph, the carpenter, whom she was going to marry after she went home to Galilee. And when the visit was over, and another party of Mary's

friends came to take her back to her home, Elizabeth kissed her on both cheeks and told her, for perhaps the hundredth time, that she was blessed among women.

Soon after Mary reached home she was married to Joseph the carpenter, and went to live in his house. Joseph knew how the angel had come down from heaven to tell Mary about the Christ who was going to be born, for one night in a dream an angel had also come to him and had told him the whole wonderful story. And he was very kind and tender with Mary, who was now his wife. When she was sad, he cheered her with long stories about the kings and prophets of the olden time; for Mary was still quite young, and she enjoyed hearing stories now almost as well as when she was a child. During the warm summer evenings she and Joseph used to wander hand in hand through the fields around the little village of Nazareth, which was their home; and when the quiet stars came out in the sky, Joseph would tell Mary other stries, which he had learned from the Roman people who lived in Judæa, stories about the strange gods of the Romans that were named after the stars, Jupiter, Mars, and Mercury. But though Mary loved the stars, she always enjoyed the Jewish stories best; for in so many of them there was some hint about the Christ who was to come.

When the winter came on, and the wind blew cold over the hills, and the wool of the sheep grew thick and long to shelter them from the storms, the people in Nazareth heard news which troubled them much. Caesar Augustus, Emperor of the Romans, who now ruled the country, sent out an order that all the Jews should be taxed; that is, that the people who had already been obliged to pay so much money to the Romans, would have to pay still more this year. And the Roman rulers

ordered that every man among the Jews should go at a certain time to the town where he was born, in order that the tax-collectors might know just where each family belonged, and take what is called a census. So Joseph, who had been born in Bethlehem, a city of Judæa about seventy miles south of Nazareth, was obliged to go there and pay his tax. And though Mary was sad at the thought of taking such a long journey in the cold of winter, she went with her husband.

One morning in December they set out from Nazareth together. As Joseph had only one donkey, he placed Mary on its back, wrapped in her warm blue cape, and himself walked beside her the whole of the long way. There were many hills to climb, and the back of the donkey was not a comfortable seat; but Mary did not complain, for she knew that Joseph always felt very sad when she was not happy, because he loved her so much. So she made believe to enjoy the long ride over the rough roads and up and down the hills; though sometimes she was so tired that she nearly fell off the back of the donkey. She pointed out to her husband all the pretty places along the way, the orchards of apricot-trees, the green Aleppo pines that grow even to this day in Judæa, and here and there, standing solitary and august upon a hill top, a giant cedar of Lebanon.

When they reached Bethlehem, Mary was really tired. But when they went to the inn, the only hotel in the little city, they found that every room was full. There was a great crowd of travellers there, who had come, like themselves, to pay their taxes to the Romans. There was not a square foot of space for them in the whole house.

But the innkeeper, who was a kind man, felt sorry for Mary; and he told Joseph that, if they wanted to, they could sleep that night in the stable. So they went out

there into the cold stable, among the cows, the oxen, and the sheep. Mary had always before had a comfortable place to sleep, even though her people were poor; and when she saw the stable of the inn where they would have to stay that night, she was so discouraged that she would have cried—if she had not known that her tears would make Joseph so sad. So she smiled at him, and said that the stable was really quite homelike. They had a lantern, which they had brought to light them on the way, and Joseph hung it up on a wooden peg against the wall. It did not give much light; but it was better than nothing. And there were so many cows and oxen in the stable that their warm breath took away the chill of the bare place.

Joseph unstrapped their blankets from the back of the donkey, on which Mary had ridden; he spread a lot of straw on the floor of the stable to make a bed for her, and placed the blankets on the straw. Then he blew out the lantern, and they lay down to rest. After a while everything grew very still. There was no sound in all the place except the regular breathing of the sleeping oxen and the cows, and now and then a little clicking noise when the hoof of an ox fell against the floor, as he moved in his sleep. There was a sweet smell of hay in the stable, and here and there, through a chink in the stone walls, a ray of starlight filtered in. But Mary did not fall asleep.

It was twelve o'clock, the very middle of the night, when the wonderful thing happened. The baby, the Christ whose name was to be called Jesus, suddenly came to them—right there in the stable.

Perhaps an angel brought him, perhaps the same angel who had told Mary he was coming—I do not know. Anyway, Mary found him there beside her. He was

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little, and warm, and sweet. Now every mother thinks her baby is the most wonderful thing in the world; but we can understand why Mary *knew* that hers was. When she first felt his breath against her face, she was so happy that it seemed to her that she would fly right away to God, with the baby in her arms. She forgot that she was lying on the floor of a cold stable, among the cattle; she forgot everything except her baby.

Joseph took down the lantern from the peg in the wall, he lighted it, and brought it to Mary. In the pale, glimmering light the baby's face shone like a star, and it seemed to Mary that all round him was a radiance far brighter than the light of the lantern. Before she looked at him, when she had felt his warm little body against her, she had only known that he was her own baby; but when she saw his face she realised all that the angel had told her, all that the old prophets had said about him—that this little baby was really God Himself, who had come down to the world to make the people good.

And now that Mary had seen the baby's face, though she was even happier than she had been a moment before, she no longer wanted to fly away to God with the baby in her arms. For with the coming of the little Jesus, who was God, and who loved the world so much, there came to her also a great love for the world—for all the world and everybody in it. She felt as if she could take them all in her arms, the rich and the poor, the good people and the bad people, the old ones and the little children. She had never dreamed that she could love them so much; but how could she help it—she who was now the mother of Jesus?

Beside the bed where Mary lay there was a little low manger, a sort of box which was filled with hay for cows to eat. And Mary wrapped the little Jesus in swaddling

clothes—long strips of cloth that poor people in those days always used in which to wrap their new-born babies—and she laid him beside her in the manger. And there, among the cows and oxen, who came to sniff at him with their soft warm noses, the baby went to sleep.

And once again it grew still in the stable, and the cows and oxen drew long breaths of drowsy content, and through the chinks in the stone wall the rays of starlight filtered in and seemed to lie in pools of silver on the floor. And the little Jesus slept sweetly in the manger beside his mother.

CHAPTER II

THE SHEPHERDS ON THE HILLS

On the night when the little Jesus was born in the stable at Bethlehem of Judaea, there were three shepherds who tended their flocks of sheep on the hills beyond the city. They were plain, simple men, with rough clothing and rough voices; but their hearts were warm and gentle. They loved the sheep, and from having watched the sheep so long as they grazed peacefully upon the hills, the shepherds had themselves become almost as quiet and slow-moving as the flocks they guarded.

Usually, when the sun went down in the evening, and the shades of night settled over the hills, and the sheep, weary with grazing, laid themselves down to sleep, the shepherds spread their blankets on the ground and went to rest beside the flocks. For in the morning, when the sun rose, the sheep would be awake and moving; and the shepherds also must be up and alert with the first coming of the daylight, that the flocks might not wander away from them and be lost.

But on the night when Jesus was born, though the shepherds had laid themselves down at the usual time, they could not sleep. They were restless, and moved from side to side. Then they lay a long time with their eyes wide open, looking at a very brilliant star in the sky, which had moved up slowly from the east until it seemed to stand right over Bethlehem. And they wondered what the star meant; for in the lands of the Far

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East the stars mean much to the people, and they believe that they can read in the moving planets what is going to happen on the earth.

In the middle of that night the shepherds, being unable to sleep, got up and built a little fire of sticks and brushwood, for it was cold. They had shivered in their blankets, lying there on the ground. But as they gathered round the brushwood fire, and held out their hands to the blazing warmth, they felt as comfortable and happy and wide-awake as they had ever felt in the middle of the day. And sitting round the fire, they told each other stories from the ancient histories of the Jewish people; for shepherds are like children in their hearts, and they love stories.

At the close of a long narrative which one of them had been telling the others, they noticed that the hills and fields all round them were shining with a brilliant light. They would have thought the sun was going to rise, if they had not seen a few minutes before the stars of midnight; for the shepherds could tell, from the places in the sky where the constellations stood, what hour of the night it was. When the shepherds saw the brilliant light, they could not imagine what it meant. They thought something terrible was going to happen, and they were afraid.

Suddenly they saw a great angel standing before them. His face and garments were all shining. He was so near them that the hem of his robe lay right in the blazing brushwood—but it did not catch fire! When the shepherds saw the angel they were still more afraid. They jumped up from the ground; they huddled together, holding each other by the arms, and their teeth chattered so that they could not speak. One of them, in leaping to his feet, had kicked over a drinking-cup; and as it

clattered against the stones the sound seemed to them like the rattle of thunder—which shows how frightened they really were.

Then the angel spoke. He told them not to be afraid; that he brought them tidings of great joy, which should be for all the people in the world. For this night, the angel said, there had been born in the city of David a Saviour for the Jews, who should be called Christ the Lord. The city of David was a name which the Jews had for Bethlehem; and when the angel said that, the shepherds knew that he meant the little city right beside them, whose buildings they could see in the starlight.

And the angel told the shepherds that when they found a new-born baby wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger, they would know it was the little Christ, whom God had sent to save the world. The swaddling clothes and the manger should be to them a sign, the angel said.

Then suddenly there appeared with the angel who was talking to the shepherds, a great company of other angels. Some of them looked like men, only they had shining garments and two broad wings behind their shoulders; these were the angels who sometimes walk on earth and do God's errands with men. Others were just winged heads, with faces like those of children, and no bodies at all; these were the cherubim, who sing always round the throne of God, and rejoice when little children are born upon the earth. Others had wonderful, rapt faces, and six long wings, which as they rested there in the air before the shepherds were folded round their bodies like a garment; these were the seraphim, who love God all the time and think of Him so much that they cannot sing, but are always silent.

The angels were so many that they filled the whole eastern sky, right up to the place where the big star shone overhead. And as they rested there in the heavens, the shepherds heard them praising their Creator, and singing:

“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will toward men.”

Then quickly, at a signal from the first angel who stood nearest the shepherds, with the edge of his long garment trailing in the brushwood fire, the whole host of angelic beings rose right up into the sky, up and up, until they disappeared. And the shepherds were left standing alone in the field, beside the dying fire; and the sheep, which had been awakened by the singing of the angels, were huddled together on a little knoll, with their small eyes wide and shining, as if they also understood that something strange had happened to the world.

Now when the angels were gone away, the shepherds said to each other:

“Let us go down into the city of Bethlehem, now, this very hour, and see for ourselves this marvel which the Lord has sent His angels to tell us about. Let us look for the child who has been born, the child who shall be wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger; for when we find a baby like that, we shall know he is the little Christ.”

The shepherds left the sheep alone in the field and started for the city. They had never before left their flocks unguarded; but then, nothing like this had ever happened before—either to them or to any other shepherds. They trusted that God, who had sent the angel, would watch the sheep for them while they were away.

When they reached the city of Bethlehem they went straight to the inn. Being themselves shepherds, it was

natural that they should go first to the stable where the sheep and other cattle were. Of course they did not know that Joseph and Mary were inside; but they thought that the man who tended the sheep and the cows of the inn-keeper might be sleeping there.

They found a big door, made of boards, on one side of the stable. It was not fastened on the inside, and they opened it very slowly and carefully, so as not to awaken too suddenly the man whom they thought might be sleeping there. They left the door wide open; and as the three shepherds stood in the doorway, that brilliant star which they had seen shone right into the stable.

In the light from the star they saw, over on the opposite side, the little low manger in which you will remember that Mary the mother had placed the new-born Jesus. The shepherds could see from the door that something was lying in the manger; but they could not make out exactly what it was, so they moved forward. After a few steps they came to the place where Joseph and Mary were lying in their blankets on the straw-littered floor. They had both awokened.

Then the shepherds told Joseph and Mary that they were looking for a baby; that an angel had come to them out in the fields and told them that one had been born in Bethlehem that night. They had come to find it.

Now all mothers delight in showing their babies; for it seems to them that every one must love the tiny creatures. So Mary put out her hand toward the manger where the little Jesus was lying, and told the men that they might come and look at him. The brilliant star which shone into the stable made it almost as light as day.

The three men leaned eagerly forward. They were tall and strong and brawny, and wore rough coats made

of sheepskin with the wool outside. One of them had a drinking-cup slung over his shoulder by a leather strap, and the two others had the leather pouches in which shepherds used to carry nuts and dates and other food, slung over their shoulders in the same way. They all had long, rough beards; their faces were tanned from years of exposure to the sun and wind; but their eyes were very soft and tender as they looked down at the little Jesus lying there in the manger, wrapped in swaddling clothes—just as the angel had said they would find him.

Now the shepherds had been so astonished at the appearance of the angels in the field, a little while before, that they were ready to accept any other wonderful thing which might happen. So they were not surprised to see a bright light all round the head of the little Jesus. And they bowed themselves down before the baby, as before a sacred thing.

While they were standing there by the manger, with their heads bowed, the baby awoke. Perhaps the light from the star shone in his face too brightly. As the little Jesus opened his eyes, the shepherds caught their breath; for the eyes were not those of a little baby—they were clear and full of intelligence. No one had ever before looked at the three shepherds in the same way as this new-born child looked at them. Though the eyes were so gentle and full of love, they seemed to see everything that was in the hearts of the men—all their hidden thoughts. And the men began to be very sorry for all the wrong things they had ever done in their lives, and they told themselves that never again would they do anything that could make the little Jesus sorry if he knew about it.

The shepherds did not stay in the stable very long, for it was still nighttime, and they thought the little

Jesus and his mother ought to sleep. Though they wanted to stay, they were afraid it might be selfish of them to keep the Holy Family awake any longer. So, after a long last look at the baby, they said good-by and went out, closing the door of the stable behind them.

Then the shepherds went a little distance away and sat down on a big flat rock, the three of them, and talked it all over. They reminded each other of the sayings of the ancient prophets, that some day a Saviour should be born among the Jews. They were happy, and just a little proud, that they had been the very first strangers to see the little baby who was going to do such great things when he grew up. They recounted their ages, and wondered if they would live long enough to see him when he should be a man. As God had been so kind as to send His angel to them with the first news, perhaps He would let them live to see still greater things—if they were good, and took faithful care of the sheep, and did not get angry about trifles.

As the three shepherds sat there on the big flat rock, the sun came up behind the hills. It seemed to them that the little city of Bethlehem had never looked so pretty, not even in the summertime, as it looked that winter morning after Jesus was born. Would Jesus make the whole world beautiful to everybody, they wondered, when he should grow to be a man?

When the sun was up, and people began to move about in the city, the shepherds left the rock where they had been sitting and went around among the houses, telling everybody they met about the beautiful baby that had been born the night before in the stable of the inn. And they told their friends that the little Jesus was really the Christ who had come to save the Jews, for had not the angel said so? Now some of the people were much

pleased to hear the glad news; but most of the men and women whom the shepherds told about the angel did not believe a word of it—they said the three men had been dreaming. But the shepherds knew that they had not been dreaming.

CHAPTER III

THE WISE MEN AND THE STAR

A little while before Jesus was born in the stable at Bethlehem, there were three wise men who lived in one of the strange countries lying east of the land of the Jews. These wise men of the East in olden times were called Magi. They knew many things which ordinary people did not know, for they had given their whole lives to study. They could sometimes tell, just by looking at a man, what was going to happen to him by and by. They knew many things about herbs and medicines, and why one herb made a man well while another made him sick or killed him. They knew the meaning of dreams. And, most wonderful of all, they understood the stars, which in those days were believed to have a strong influence upon the people of the earth. These Magi could tell, by the constellation which was rising in the east at the time when a child was born, what sort of man he would be, and what he would look like. And if there was any star right overhead at the moment of a child's birth, they could tell, from their knowledge of that star, what business or profession the child would follow when he grew to be a man, and whether he would be lucky or unlucky.

Many people in the Far East, in Babylonia and Assyria and Persia, had not been taught to pray to God as we do; they believed that what was written in the stars would have to happen anyway. So they had a great re-

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spect for their wise men who claimed to understand such things. What their ancient prophets had been to the Jewish people, these wise men were to the people of the East; and whenever they said that anything was true, nobody dared to dispute them.

One night in the early winter of the year when Christ was born, the three wise men, in their own far country, were together on the flat roof of a palace, where they had come to study the stars. As they stood there side by side on the roof they looked very tall and strange, in their long robes embroidered with symbols: the Signs of the Zodiac, Aries, Taurus, Gemini, and so on; and other signs which meant the planets—Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, the sun, the moon, Venus and Mercury. Any one who should dress like that in these days would be considered very queer; but in the olden times the wise men robed themselves in strange garments, that every one who saw them might know how wise they were; for the Magi knew the meaning of these marks on their clothes, and others did not.

As the three Magi stood there on the flat roof of the palace, they saw something which surprised them much. In the eastern sky, right before them, was a big star which they had never seen before. Now you will remember that the shepherds, who tended their flocks on the hills near Bethlehem, had seen this same star and wondered what it meant. The Magi also wondered. But they were not afraid, as the shepherds had been. For the wise men of the East believed that when a brilliant star, like that, appeared suddenly in the sky, it meant that some great man was going to be born.

Now the Magi were indeed very wise; and one of the strange things they knew was which Sign of the Zodiac was supposed to rule the various countries of the earth.

And because they had seen the star in the East in that part of the heavens which ruled the land of Judæa, according to their reckoning, they decided that a great man was going to be born right away in the country of the Jews.

So, after taking a good look at the star, and counselling together, they went down the stairway which led from the roof to the lower rooms of the palace, and began to get ready for the long journey to Judæa.

It seemed to them that the appearance of so bright a star must mean the birth of a great king; so they determined to go straight to the palace of King Herod at Jerusalem. Even the Magi, the wisest of men, never thought of looking for a baby king in a stable. They supposed that a son had been born to King Herod, of course. Now in those days it was the custom for men who came to visit new-born princes, to bring them handsome presents; so the three wise men, who were almost kings themselves so high was their position, took each a rich casket and filled it with beautiful gifts for the little King of the Jews, as they called him. Then they put in their travelling sacks such other things as they would want on the journey, including books and scrolls covered with queer marks, which stood for the planets and the Signs of the Zodiac; for they expected to figure out in that strange way all the great things which were to happen to the little king when he grew up.

Then they called for their camels, the tall, grotesque animals which the people of the Far East often use instead of horses, because the camels can go so far without getting tired, and need so little to eat and drink by the way. The three camels were ordered to kneel down; the sacks containing the presents for the baby, the scrolls and other things, were fastened to their sides; then each of the Magi

took his seat on the top of the big hump in the middle of his camel's back; at a signal the camels rose clumsily to their feet, wailing and grumbling in camel language, and the wise men were on their way.

They had not even waited for daylight, for the stars made the way quite plain, and they were in a great hurry to reach the far-off palace of King Herod. They would have made an interesting picture, had there been any one to see them, the three men in their long garments, mounted high on the backs of the tall camels, which swayed gracefully from side to side as they padded on. Can we not see them in imagination, rising slowly up and over the ridge of a hill, outlined against the grey morning sky?

They had many adventures and terrible hardships by the way; for in those days there were few roads, and those very bad, and there was always danger from robbers. When at last they reached Jerusalem, King Herod was very glad to see them; for the kings of that time all had a great respect for wise men—which is not always so in our day.

But when the Magi said: "Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the East and are come to worship him," Herod was much troubled. No little son had been born to him in his palace; and if one had been born somewhere else—one whose coming the star foretold—it needs must be some child of another family, who would take the throne away from Herod. No wonder he was distressed.

So the King called together all the old priests, and the scribes who kept the sacred books and told the people what they meant, and the King asked them where the prophets had said that the Christ should be born. King Herod had also seen the star in the East; and though he ought to have been glad, he was not glad at all. He did

not want anybody but himself to be King of the Jews—not even the promised Messiah.

When Herod asked the assembled priests and scribes where the old books declared that Christ should be born, with one accord they answered: "In Bethlehem of Judæa."

Then the King sent for the three Magi, who had come from the East on their camels, led by the star. He pretended to be very glad that Christ was born at last, and he told the wise men to go to Bethlehem and search for the young child, and when they had found him, to come back to Jerusalem and let him know, that he also might go and worship the infant Christ. But Herod really meant to kill the little Jesus, and not to worship him.

The three wise men again mounted their camels, taking with them the presents they had brought, and started for Bethlehem. It was night when they came to the city where the little Jesus was, and the great star shone in the sky.

They went first to the inn, and asked the people there if they knew anything about a child who had been born. Of course the people in the inn were much interested in the little Jesus out in the stable, because of the strange story which the shepherds had told about the angels which had appeared to them in the field on the night of his birth, singing: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will toward men." They told the wise men all they had heard. And the Magi went to the stable, with the presents for the baby in beautiful rich boxes which they carried in their hands.

Now when the Magi left their own far country, they had only supposed, from the star in the East, that a powerful king was to be born in Judæa; but when they had learned from King Herod and the priests in Jerusalem that the great Messiah of the Jews was expected to

be born in Bethlehem, they were more than ever anxious to see the wonderful little baby. Had they not been so wise, they would have been surprised to learn that the Christ had been born in a stable; but they remembered that King David, who wrote the most beautiful songs in all the world, had been only a shepherd boy when he was young.

As the three Magi went along the path to the stable, a little black dog came out and barked at them; and all the people of the inn looked after them with great curiosity, for they had never before seen any one who wore garments like those of the Magi, covered with such marks and symbols. Even the High Priest at Jerusalem, when dressed for a great ceremony, was a less imposing figure. The wise men from the East created a sensation in the little town of Bethlehem.

Joseph was standing in the door of the stable looking up at the stars when the three Magi came down the path. His heart was very full of love that night, and he had been wondering why God had chosen him to take care of the little Jesus and to be a father to him. Was he good enough and wise enough—he, only a simple carpenter of Nazareth? When he saw the wise men, Joseph caught his breath, for he had never beheld anything so splendid. He wondered who the visitors could be.

He invited them to enter, just as if the stable had been a beautiful house; and the three wise men came in, among the cows, the oxen, and the sheep. The one lantern did not give much light, but the stars were brilliant that night, and the middle of the stable seemed almost as bright as in the daytime, though in the corners were dark shadows, from which the eyes of the cows shone out.

When the Magi saw the mother and the baby Jesus,

they fell down on their knees before them, saying strange words in their own foreign language, which neither Joseph nor Mary could understand; but they supposed that the men were saying prayers.

Mary looked very pretty, as she sat there with the baby in her arms. Around her shoulders was the bright blue cape; her dark hair lay in little curls all round her face, her eyes were bright with happiness, and on her face was that sweet mother-look which little children love to see—and older people as well. The wise men thought they had never seen any woman who looked so much like a queen.

The eyes of the baby Jesus were wide open, though it was so late at night. He seemed to understand why these strangers had come to visit him. And, little as he was, it seemed to all of them that he smiled, when the Magi held out to him the gifts which they had brought—gold, frankincense, and myrrh. For the Magi, who were so wise and who knew the meanings of things, gave the little Jesus gold to mean that he was a king. They gave him frankincense to mean that he was holy, for frankincense was the sweet gum which the priests burned in the temples before the altar, and which gave out so sweet a smell. And they gave him myrrh, a resin found on certain trees and shrubs in Arabia and Abyssinia and which was used for medicine, to mean that, though he was Christ himself and came from God, he was nevertheless a human being, and would have to suffer much while he stayed upon the earth, and that some time he would have to die.

The reason why we give each other Christmas presents now is because the Magi gave those presents to the little Jesus, and our Christmas is the anniversary of his birth.

Joseph and Mary did not have any rich food to offer their noble guests, so they gave them each a cup of cool,

sweet milk, fresh from one of the cows. And the Magi thought they had never drunk anything so delicious in all their lives. Then the four men, the Magi and Joseph, sat down on the straw beside Mary and the little Jesus. Though the wise men had murmured their worship of Christ in the strange tongue of their own far country, yet they knew the language of Joseph and Mary very well; and they sat with them a long time, telling stories of Persia, Arabia, and Abyssinia, and other distant lands. And they explained to Joseph and Mary the meanings of the strange marks which were embroidered on their garments, the symbols which stood for the sun, the moon, the planets, and the Signs of the Zodiac. And the Magi also told the meaning of other figures which were embroidered on the breast of their robes, marks which they had themselves learned in Egypt, the far southern land of the river Nile, the Pyramids and the Sphinx.

When Mary said to the wise men that Egypt must be a wonderful country, and that she would like to go there some time, they answered that perhaps she would have her wish—very soon. It did not seem probable to Mary, who had never in all her life been more than seventy miles away from home; but she knew that these men were wise, and if they said that she might go to Egypt some day—why, she was ready to believe it. So many things had happened to her in the last year, that almost anything seemed possible for the future.

Before they went away, the Magi learned from Joseph and Mary the exact time when the little Jesus was born, for they meant to figure out, by their knowledge of the stars, what was going to happen to him in after life. Then they said good-by, bowed themselves once again before the baby Christ, and walked with slow and stately steps out of the stable. They found the three camels

lying down in the yard, peacefully resting. Each man climbed on the top of his camel's big hump; they gave the sharp, peculiar cry which in camel language means "get up," the camels rose clumsily to their feet, complaining as usual, and in a few minutes the three mysterious figures disappeared down the long stony road which led to Jerusalem.

But after going a little way, they turned sharply toward the East, and went over the mountains which separate Bethlehem from the wilderness of Judæa. For the night before they had been warned by God in a dream that they were not to return to the palace of King Herod at Jerusalem, as the King had asked them, to give him news of the baby Christ. God told the wise men in the dream that Herod was plotting to kill the little Jesus, so that he might never become the King of the Jews, as the old prophets had foretold.

They rode straight on for the rest of the night and all the next day; then they pitched their tent and sat themselves down around the camp-fire to figure out together, from their knowledge of the stars, what was going to happen to the little Jesus when he grew up. They were smiling when they began their work; but as the minutes went by, their faces became very grave and sad. For they saw that the beautiful child whom they had left in the stable at Bethlehem was going to have much trouble. But they also saw that he would become the most famous being in the world, and the best, and that for ages after his death millions of people would call themselves his friends and followers.

The next morning the three wise men mounted their camels again, and rode on toward that mysterious land of the East from whence they had come. And they were never seen in Judæa any more.

CHAPTER IV

OVER THE HILLS TO EGYPT

After the three wise men had ridden away on their camels, leaving Joseph, Mary, and the little Jesus in the stable at Bethlehem, the Holy Family went to sleep; for the hour was late, and they were weary with much talking. In his sleep that night Joseph had a dream.

It seemed that an angel of God came and stood beside him, and pointing to Mary and the little Jesus, the angel told Joseph to take the young child and his mother and flee into Egypt—that strange land which the Magi had told them about the evening before. And the angel also said to Joseph in the dream, that he should stay in Egypt until God sent him word to come away; because King Herod wanted to kill the little Jesus, and it was not safe for them in Judæa.

When Joseph awoke in the morning he was much troubled about his dream. He knew that he would have to do what God said, because God had trusted him with the care of the wonderful baby and his mother. But the land of Egypt was very far away, it was then winter, and Joseph was a poor man. He wondered how they would be able to get food in that strange, far-off country, even if they should succeed in reaching there at all. He supposed that the people in Egypt spoke a different language to theirs. The wise men had told him about the great Pyramids down there, which were made of solid stone, and were so high that a man standing at the bottom and

looking up their sloping sides, felt himself no larger than a fly. Joseph was a good carpenter, perhaps the best in Galilee; but would the people of Egypt be willing to pay him for the kind of work that he could do? He knew, of course, that the people of Egypt did not live in Pyramids. Perhaps they did not even build them any more; for the Magi had said that the great Pyramids were very, very old.

But, even more than he dreaded the strange life in Egypt, Joseph dreaded the journey there. He did not even know exactly how far it was; but surely it must be four or five hundred miles; and they had only the one donkey, on which Mary had ridden down to Bethlehem from their home in Galilee. Joseph supposed that he himself would have to walk the whole of the long way to Egypt. And how would they get milk on the way? Perhaps he had better buy a goat, and take it along with them. He supposed that he could buy one in Bethlehem, and wondered how much it would cost.

He went outside the stable in the grey morning light, and sitting down on a flat stone he counted over his money. It was not very much. And it never occurred to him that he could use any of the gold which the Magi had brought to Jesus. No journey that we could possibly imagine, in these days of railroads and great steamships, would seem so hard an undertaking as that winter journey from Bethlehem to Egypt which the angel had commanded them to take.

When Joseph went back into the stable, Mary the mother was awake. She smiled at him cheerfully, and pointing to the little Jesus, who was lying asleep in the manger beside her, she whispered:

“How beautiful he is!”

Joseph bent over and kissed the sleeping child, then

he sat down on the straw beside Mary and told her about his dream. He had supposed she would be terribly distressed. He had even been afraid that she would cry, though he had never seen her shed a tear before, no matter what happened. But she was still very young, and he knew how much she loved the hills and fields of peaceful Galilee, which was their home.

How great was his surprise when Mary, instead of saying she was sorry, just clapped her hands with joy, and said:

"Now we shall see that wonderful country which the Magi told us about last night. Don't you remember how, when I said I would like to go there, one of them answered that perhaps I would have my wish—very soon?"

Joseph did remember. And Mary was so cheerful that he soon forgot how troubled he had been. When he asked her if she was not afraid that something would happen to the little Jesus along the way, she smiled and said:

"God will take care of him."

Joseph could not say no to this; and as soon as they had had their breakfast, he went out into the little streets of Bethlehem to look for a goat to furnish them with milk on the way to Egypt. He found a good one, which a man was willing to sell him for very little money; and he soon came back to Mary in the stable, leading the goat by a string. If the baby Jesus had been a little older, he would have found the goat a charming playfellow; but he was still too small to play. The goat, however, went right over to the manger where the little Jesus was, and lay down beside him. This pleased the mother very much, for it seemed to her that even animals knew by instinct how lovely her baby was.

They started for Egypt in the night-time, and did not tell anybody where they were going; for they knew that King Herod would be furious when he learned that they had left Bethlehem. And they were afraid he might send somebody after them, if he knew where they were going, and kill the little Jesus on the way.

By the pale light of the stars they came out of the stable, closing the door softly after them. Joseph strapped their blankets on the back of the donkey, to make a soft cushion for Mary. He lifted her onto the donkey's back, and put the little Jesus in her arms. Then they started, Joseph walking beside the donkey. He did not have to lead the goat now, for the animal had taken such a fancy to the little Jesus that she would have followed him anywhere. You know this was a nanny-goat—the kind that give delicious milk.

When they reached the hill beyond the town, they stopped and turned for one last look at the dear little city of Bethlehem, where their baby had been born, and where so many other things had happened to them. They did not know if they would ever see it again.

We are told that they went across the hilly country of Judaea to the city of Joppa, and from thence along the coast of the Mediterranean Sea. Joseph was probably afraid that they would lose their way if they did not follow the seacoast, which curves around toward Egypt. Perhaps, if you look at the map of Syria in your geography, you can see the way they went.

We are told that sometimes, when they came to a point where two roads met, and they did not know which road to take, the angel which had come to Joseph in the dream appeared suddenly before them, pointing out the right way.

We are also told that one day, when they had gone



H Moore

In Egypt

into a thick forest, all the trees bowed their heads to the little Jesus—all except the aspen-tree, which stood up very stiff and proud, and would not bend its head. Then God said some strong words to the proud aspen-tree; and the tree was so frightened that it began to tremble, so that its leaves could be seen quivering all over it. And that, according to the old story, is the reason why the leaves of the aspen-tree (which is a kind of poplar) are always quivering even to this day.

Now at that time there were in Judea many bands of robbers, wild men who lived by stealing things; and Joseph and Mary were afraid that some night when they were asleep, a company of these bold robbers would try to steal their donkey and their nanny-goat. So on those nights—and there were many of them—when they were not near any village, but had to sleep under the open sky, in the fields, they always made the donkey and the nanny-goat lie down close beside them. This the little goat liked very much, and she would nestle her cold nose against Mary's arm, near the head of the sleeping Jesus. They were so kind to the little goat that she considered herself quite like one of the family. And when, some days, they had to travel a long way and over rough roads, the nanny-goat did not lag behind a bit; but just trotted right along beside them, as if she understood that Egypt was still a long way off, and that they had to hurry.

Of course there was always the greater danger that robbers might fall upon them and kill them, and carry away the gold which the Magi had given to the little Jesus; but they could not believe that God would let that happen.

One night, when they were lying out under the stars, Mary had a strange dream. It seemed to her, in the dream, that they were still travelling on, just as they had

been all through the day; and that in the air all round them, and among the leaves of the trees beside the road, were hundreds of children's faces—little frightened faces, with wide eyes and quivering lips. When Mary awoke it was still night. She was so troubled by the dream that she awoke her husband, and told him all about it. They wondered what it meant; for in those days people had great faith in dreams, and always thought that they meant something.

This one had a very deep meaning, as you will see. For when the three Magi did not return to King Herod at Jerusalem, as he had told them to, Herod was enraged. He thought the wise men mocked at him. So he sent out his soldiers, with orders to kill all the little children in Bethlehem and the places round about—all the little children who were less than two years old; for he thought by that wicked order to make sure of killing Jesus. As you know, Jesus and his family were now far away from Bethlehem, and out of the reach of Herod; but all the mothers of young children in that country were broken-hearted. The old stories tell us that hundreds of little ones were destroyed, that not one was spared who was less than two years old. And that was the meaning of Mary's strange dream—the meaning of the mass of little frightened faces she had seen, in the air all round her and among the leaves of the trees beside the road.

The Holy Family went on and on, day after day. Several weeks had passed since they left Bethlehem; for the donkey did not go very fast, and it was a long, long way. After a time they left the seacoast and travelled inland, for they wanted to go to that part of Egypt where the Sphinx and the great Pyramids were. They had to cross rivers and go around lakes; and sometimes they were obliged to walk for a day or two along the bank of a

stream, before they could find a place shallow enough for them to cross, or find a boatman who would row them over to the western side.

As they went farther south it grew slowly warmer and warmer, and they began to see more palm-trees and fewer pines. Sometimes there were no trees or hills at all, just level stretches of grey sand, in which the donkey sank half way to his knees as he walked slowly on, with Mary and the little Jesus on his back.

It was well on in the month of February when they came to the broad desert east of the Nile. Here a real grief met them; for they found they would be obliged to have camels to carry them the rest of the way. The faithful donkey had to be left behind. The little nanny-goat was so tired from the long journey that she gave hardly any milk, and they had not the heart to make her follow them any farther. They found a man with kind eyes who gave them two camels, in exchange for the donkey, the nanny-goat, and a little gold. This man also taught them how to guide the camels; and Joseph, who was now very weary from having walked so far, was glad of a chance to ride.

Now a camel is so tall that he has to lie down in order to let any one get on his back. The first time Mary got on the back of her camel, she was half-frightened; and when the great animal rose clumsily to his feet, she thought he was going to pitch her over his head. Mary was not frightened for herself; but she had the little Jesus in her arms, and she was always afraid he might be hurt. It was not the camel's fault that he was so clumsy in getting on to his feet; for he did not know how to get up in any other way. With his long legs and queer, humped body, he did the best he could.

Mary had not the heart to bid good-by to the faithful

donkey and the little nanny-goat; she just motioned to the kind-eyed man to take them away out of her sight. She could not speak to the man, because she did not know his language; but the man of the desert also loved animals, and he understood her.

They did not get far that day. If you have never ridden on the back of a camel, you do not know how hard it is at first. The steady, rocking motion makes some persons feel quite sick. Before they stopped for the night, Mary was so tired that she would have wished herself back in Bethlehem—if it had not been for the danger which there threatened the little Jesus, from the hatred of Herod, the wicked King.

Perhaps, if the camels had not been over the road before, and found their own way by instinct across the desert to the river Nile, Joseph and Mary would never have reached there. If it had not been for the position of the sun, which always rises in the east and sets in the west, no matter where we are, they would sometimes have seemed quite turned round. After a few days they grew fond of their clumsy camels, and they also became accustomed to the rocking motion of the camels' backs.

These strange animals seemed to smell fresh water a long way off; and no matter how grey and lifeless the desert looked ahead of the travellers, sooner or later their long-legged companions would bring them to a place where there was cool, pure water and a grove of palm-trees. Some persons may believe that camels are stupid creatures and could not find their way like that; but perhaps the angel which had appeared to Joseph in the dream and told him to take Mary and the little Jesus down to this far land, guided the camels also. I do not know.

One day they came to a place so strange that Mary thought she must be dreaming. They found themselves

on the edge of a forest, with great trees—many of them a hundred feet in length and three feet thick, some lying on the ground, some leaning against each other. The trees were brown and black and shining; but what surprised Joseph and Mary so much, was to see that all these trees were made of stone. Travellers in Egypt go to this place now, and call it the petrified forest; but Joseph and Mary had never heard of it before. Surely Egypt was a strange land!

They got down from the camels' backs and came and touched the trees with their hands, to make sure that they had seen aright. Yes, these trees were solid stone. They knew that the great stone Pyramids and the Sphinx had been made by human hands; but here was something which they thought was quite as wonderful, and made by God Himself. Mary wished that the little Jesus were big enough to see and understand what a strange place he was in!

They once more climbed on the camels' backs, and in a little while they found themselves on the top of a range of hills. The camels stopped of their own accord, and Joseph and Mary caught their breath in surprise and admiration; for there, spread out before them, was the valley of the river Nile. They were facing the west, where the sun was just going down in a blaze of red and gold. At the foot of the hill whereon they rested was a little city; beyond it flowed the broad blue waters of the river Nile, quiet, majestic, bearing on its bosom many little boats with three-cornered sails, which made them look like birds, flying over the water. And, farther west, beyond the river, on the edge of the immeasurable desert, they saw the great three-cornered Pyramids, grey, vast, mysterious, their tops now reddened and gilded by the rays of the setting sun.

Resting there on the backs of their camels, on the top of that ridge of hills, with the river Nile and the Pyramids before them, Joseph and Mary knew that their long and toilsome journey was at an end. They realised that God had brought them safely to the far-off land where He had told them to go; and they thanked Him for His care and guidance. They thanked Him also that He had made the world so beautiful and so large, and that He was now letting them see the most wonderful part of it—the land of Egypt, where the Jewish Joseph, son of Jacob, had been sold into bondage thousands of years ago; the river Nile, beside whose waters, in a thicket of bulrushes, the cradle of the Jewish baby Moses had been hidden, to save him from the wrath of the King of Egypt. As Mary thought of the little Moses and of how he had been saved, she hugged the little Jesus still closer to her breast, and prayed that God would guard him also forever from the wrath of the King of the Jews—even as He had guarded Moses from that other King.

The land of Egypt was a land of great interest for the young Jewish woman, Mary. All her life she had heard stories of this country, and now she was really here! She wondered if Moses himself had not sometimes stood on the top of this very hill, and looked down upon the waters of the Nile and the great Pyramids, thousands of years ago. She was not quite sure whether the Pyramids had been built before the time of Moses, or afterward; for in her short life she had not had time to learn everything—though God had found her wise enough to be the mother of Jesus.

Joseph and Mary rested there on their camels, looking down at the valley of the Nile, while the sunset sky turned slowly from red to gold, from gold to white, and the twilight shadows drew near. Then they hurried down to the little city by the edge of the river.

They found a small temple, in a grove of sycamore-trees, and there they rested that first night. If you should ever go to Egypt and should visit Old Cairo, the guides will show you a little church, very ancient, where the Holy Family are said to have lived during the first few weeks of their sojourn in the land of Egypt. The church itself was not built then; but the crypt—that is, the part below the surface of the ground—is very, very old; and it is interesting to stand in that crypt, and to realise that perhaps the baby voice of Jesus once echoed along those old stone vaults, as our voices echo now.

Her first few days in Egypt were days of wonder for Mary. Everything was so different to Galilee, where she had lived all her life before. The Egyptians were an interesting people, with their dark faces and brilliant black eyes; and Mary soon learned that they also, like the Jews, were ruled over by the Romans. The poor people lived in huts made of mud, which had been baked in the sun. Around these huts were always groups of little brown Egyptian children, some of them with hardly any clothes, others in scanty garments of red and yellow and pink.

She never tired of looking at the broad blue river, the fields of vivid green clover, the brilliant poppy fields, and the tall palm-trees—which looked like long-handled feather dusters as they waved against the sky. At the twilight hour she loved to watch the herdsmen driving home their flocks and herds of cattle to the little village; but, best of all, she loved to listen to the songs of the boatmen on the Nile. They were not like any songs she had ever heard before; they seemed to be the voice of the homesickness of all the ages.

The Egyptians worshipped the river Nile. They thought it was a god, and prayed to it, as they did also

to the sun, which was another of their gods. This seemed strange to Joseph and Mary, who had always prayed to Jehovah, and they could not understand how the Egyptians felt about such things. Their dark-skinned neighbours also believed that a goddess, whom they called Hathor, dwelt in the sycamore-tree. Now the temple where Joseph and Mary and the little Jesus lived was surrounded by sycamore-trees; they were very beautiful, with their mottled bark of pale green and violet-grey; but it seemed foolish—even wicked—to worship them. And strangest of all to this Jewish family was the adoration which the Egyptians gave to certain animals, cows, crocodiles, and even cats and beetles. They did not worship all these animals, but special ones which they kept in the temples.

Then, too, the Egyptians did not bury their dead friends, but made them into mummies. These mummies were just dried dead bodies, preserved in some peculiar way unknown to us. The faces were often covered with gold, and the bodies were wound round and round and round with cloths. For the Egyptians believed that the souls of the dead would some time come back to the earth and want their bodies again. They put these mummies in tombs made of stone, often cut into the solid rock; and with the mummies they placed a quantity of little things which they thought their friends might need in heaven—dishes, jewelry, and other ornaments—and even little images of men, made of glazed blue earthenware, which they believed would come to life in heaven and act as servants to the people who were dead. Do you wonder that the Egyptians, with these queer beliefs and customs, seemed very strange indeed to Joseph and Mary?

But the great event of their sojourn in Egypt was their visit to the great Pyramids and the Sphinx, across

the river Nile. From their first day in Egypt they had wanted to go there. Mary was always thinking of what the three Magi, the wise men from the East, had told her about the Pyramids and the Sphinx, that wonderful night when they had come to see the baby Jesus, in his manger at Bethlehem. She wished that [the Magi, in their far-away home, could know that she was here in Egypt now; for though they were so wise, and seemed so rich and powerful, Mary knew that they loved the little Jesus, and that made her feel that they were her own friends.

One afternoon, when the sky seemed bluer than ever, the sun brighter, and the wonderful air of Egypt more life-giving and pure, the Holy Family started for the Pyramids, Joseph carrying the little Jesus in his arms. They found an Egyptian boatman who was willing to take them across the river, in one of those boats with three-cornered sails which had seemed to them like birds flying over the water, that first day when they had rested on their camels at the top of the hill and had gazed down at the Nile. As the boat went skimming over the broad waters, Mary thought of the Jordan, the little river of Galilee, her home. It seemed very small to her in comparison with this great stream; as small as the little tombs of Galilee compared with the great Pyramids yonder, which you know are also tombs—built ages ago to contain the mummies of ancient kings of Egypt.

In those days there were no guides to show people around the Pyramids, as there are now. Silent and alone they stood, amid the wastes of the grey desert, their solitude disturbed only now and then by a passing camel train, or by the whistling wind with its burden of whirling sand.

The Holy Family had landed a little to the north of the Pyramids. The Egyptian boatman did not follow

them, but waited with his little craft beside the river. By motions they had made him understand what they wanted. The Pyramids are at some distance from the Nile, and Joseph and Mary had to walk. As they went slowly over the shifting sand toward the greatest of the Pyramids, it seemed to grow larger and larger. The Magi had told them in Bethlehem that one hundred thousand men had worked for twenty years to build this giant mass of stone; but as they came gradually nearer, it seemed to them impossible that human hands could ever have built it. Each of its four sides is nearly an eighth of a mile long, eight hundred and twenty feet, and the sides slope upward toward the pointed top. Joseph and Mary stood at the bottom and looked up. It made them dizzy.

"Oh, that the little Jesus were large enough to see and understand!" said Mary to her husband.

It seemed to her that the baby in Joseph's arms smiled up at the Pyramid—though he was really too young to smile. But mothers love to imagine such things.

They walked round to the other side of the great Pyramid, and stood looking toward the other two, which lie in a straight line to the southwest. They still wondered if Moses had been here; but they had not been able to ask the Egyptians, because they could not yet speak their language.

And now, after nearly two thousand years, the descendants of those Egyptian people love and follow Jesus—that same Jesus who was too little even to smile at their Pyramids, the first time he saw them.

Mary and Joseph wandered around until they came to the Sphinx, the great stone monster sixty-six feet high, with the head of a man and the body of a lion, which lies there on the desert sand, facing the east and the Nile.

Mary climbed up between the stone paws of the monster, and sat down there with the little Jesus in her arms. She also looked far away, like the Sphinx, toward the east and the river Nile. She thought of the thousands of years which had passed slowly, one by one, since first the Sphinx had stood upon these sands. She thought of the millions of men who had been born and who had died in that long time, each joying in the sunshine, each doing the little work which God allotted him, then going back to the silence from which he came. And then she thought of the baby in her arms, her little Jesus whom the angel had told her was the great Messiah of the Jews, whose coming the prophets had foretold. What would he do when he should be a man? Though she knew that he was God's own son, and that he would transform the world when he grew up, he was now just her own little baby. It was hard for her to realise how great he was, though it was natural for her to think him the most wonderful creature ever born.

The Jewish man and woman remained beside the Sphinx until the grey desert was all wrapt in the greyer shadows of the night. One by one they saw the little stars come out twinkling in the sky. And then, after a while, the great round silvery moon rose over the eastern hills beyond the Nile river, and all the desert world was touched with magic. The Pyramids, which had been grey a little while before, were now deep blue in the moonlight.

Joseph and Mary walked a short way to the south, and turning, looked back at the Sphinx, lying there long and motionless upon the sand. In some strange way they could not understand, the moonlight seemed to bring the Sphinx to life, and over the face of the stone monster a faint smile seemed to flicker. The sight made Mary's heart beat fast, and she clung to the arm of Joseph. The

little Jesus, who had been asleep, moved in her arms, as if he also felt that something unusual was happening. Mary asked herself if the Sphinx was smiling with gladness because the Christ had come. Of course this strange appearance was only the effect of the moonlight; but in those days the imagination of men and women was more vivid than now. When they saw anything unusual, they took it as a sign from God.

After a time they turned their backs upon the great stone forms of the desert, and walked down to the river, where the Egyptian boatman who had brought them over still waited for them upon the shore. As they drew nearer they heard him singing to himself and to the Nile—perhaps the very song which the boatmen used to sing thousands of years ago, when the Pyramids were being built; for things change slowly in the land of Egypt, and yesterday, to-day, and to-morrow seem to be all one hour in the life of God.

Sitting quietly in the little boat, under its three-cornered sail, they flew lightly back over the water, which rippled and glimmered in the moonlight. They seemed to be sailing straight toward the heart of the moon, which made a path of silver across the water before them. Of all the beautiful hours of Mary's life, this hour upon the moonlight bosom of the Nile seemed to her most beautiful—except for that one hour, in the stable at Bethlehem, when the little Jesus had come to her and she had first looked into his face. She was so happy that she thought she would like to sail right on and on forever, along that silvery pathway, toward the heart of the moon.

But in a few minutes they reached the other shore. And the Egyptian boatman, when they offered him a piece of silver for taking them across the river, shook his head, and would not accept it. He pointed toward the

little Jesus, as if he meant that they should keep the silver for him.

They went back to the temple where they lived, and that night Mary had a dream. She dreamed that the baby Jesus was grown to be a man, tall and strong and beautiful, and that she was walking over the desert sands with him, toward the great Pyramids on the other side of the Nile. And she dreamed that, as they passed the Sphinx, the monster bent its head and kissed with its stony lips the hand of her son, Jesus the Christ. It seemed so real that when she awoke and found herself in the little temple, with the baby Jesus on her arm, she could hardly realise for a moment that it had been all a dream. But the Jews believed that dreams always came true, in spirit if not in fact; and Mary knew then that some time, in the far-away future, the people of Egypt would love and follow Jesus.

For several years Joseph and Mary continued to live in the city on the bank of the river Nile. They did not live in the temple all this time, but had a little house of their own, which Joseph built himself. As the long months passed slowly by, they came to understand the language of the Egyptian people around them; and the good Joseph found much work to do, and was able to support his family in comfort, without touching the gold which the three wise men from the East had given to the little Jesus, in the stable at Bethlehem.

Mary learned from the Egyptian women how to weave the mats of rushes on which the people slept, and how to make many other useful and beautiful things. And the Holy Family were content with their life in Egypt; they were not homesick for Galilee, and were willing to stay here just as long as God wanted them to stay. You remember that the angel had told Joseph in the dream

that God would send him word when it was time to return home.

And the dear baby Jesus grew and thrived in the Egyptian sunshine. He was now no longer wrapped in swaddling clothes, but had little dresses, white and pretty, which his mother embroidered with her own hands. In a few months he was able to stand on his feet, and then to take a few steps, guided by his mother, who would never leave him out of her sight—so much she loved him.

She had been charmed by the cooing and crooning of his babyhood; but the hour when his little lips first formed the name of Mother, was a wonderful hour for Mary. When Joseph came home that evening from his day's work, she ran to him to tell the joyous news that the baby Jesus had really called her Mother! Joseph was almost as happy as she that night, and they sat a long time beside the bed of the sleeping child, hand in hand, talking over their plans for teaching him all the beautiful stories of the Jews, and many other things—when he should be older.

A few days later the little Jesus spoke the name of God, for he had heard his parents speak that name so often. Mary wondered if it was wrong of her to be so happy that he had said the name of Mother even before that of God? For, however great he was, was he not first of all her own baby? And she felt that God would forgive her.

When Jesus was a little older he began to play with the Egyptian children, and so he learned to speak their language also. Though he was the smallest of all the little ones who used to play around the door of Joseph and Mary, yet he always led in the games, and all the dark-skinned children followed him and did just what he

wished. The Egyptian mothers were not jealous that he was more beautiful than their children; for they loved him, too.

Now Jesus had a little kitten to play with; and Mary was much troubled one day when the Egyptian women, who, as I have told you, worshipped animals, declared to her that the kitten was a god, and wanted to take it away for worship in the temple. But she would not let them, because the little Jesus loved it so much. Already, as Mary told Joseph, Jesus was teaching the Egyptians not to worship animals—but to love them and be kind to them.

One day, when he was still a small child, they took him in a boat across the river Nile, to see the Pyramids and the Sphinx. Mary told him that he must remember these things all his life. But she did not tell him about her dream, that the Sphinx had bent and kissed his hand—for he was still too young to understand.

One night after they had been living in Egypt a long time, the angel which had appeared to Joseph in the dream in Bethlehem years before, and had told him to bring Mary and the infant Jesus down to Egypt—the same angel appeared to Joseph again, in another dream, and said that the time had now come for them to return to the Jewish land.

Jesus was now old enough to understand where they were going, and he was delighted at the thought of the journey. He called together all his little Egyptian playmates, and told them that he was going far away and might never see them again. We may be sure they cried, these little dark-skinned children, at the thought of losing the wonderful boy. Perhaps he cried a little, too—for the tears of his friends meant much to Jesus, always. That is one reason why we love him.

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But at last they mounted the camels again, the young Jesus riding in front of his mother, and started back over the hills and through the petrified forest and across the desert toward Judæa.

CHAPTER V

THE LITTLE TEACHER IN THE TEMPLE

Joseph and Mary, with the young Jesus, had ridden out of Egypt on their camels; but when, after long weeks of travelling, they came to the borders of their own country, they sold the great, long-legged, humpbacked animals, and bought a donkey. Camels are called “the ships of the desert”; and had our travellers taken theirs all the way to Nazareth, their home, they might not have been able to sell them to anybody.

The donkey which they bought was large and strong, and Joseph placed Mary the mother and the little boy upon its back. They were still a long way from Nazareth; but Joseph intended to walk. Though the good carpenter was now beginning to grow old, and his black hair and beard were thickly sprinkled with grey, he was still vigourous, and a walk of only a hundred miles did not seem long to him.

As they came into Judæa, and began to meet with Jews along the way, it seemed so good to them to hear their own familiar language once again! They had not realised in Egypt that they were homesick; but now, when they heard the dear old Jewish language after all those years, they could have laughed for joy. They hailed the first company of Jews they met, and asked for news of home. They wanted to know everything which had happened since they left the stable at Bethlehem years before; and the first thing they learned was that

Herod, the wicked King who had wanted to kill the little Jesus, was now dead. This was just what the angel had told Joseph in Egypt, when it had appeared to him in the dream, and said that it was time for them to go home. It is always good, when an angel has told you something, to have it verified by the lips of ordinary men. Of course you had confidence in the angel—but this gives you confidence in yourself.

When they parted from that pleasant and talkative company of Jews, our wanderers felt as if they were already nearly home. They could almost smell the flowery lanes of Galilee; and as Mary rode slowly along on the back of the leisurely donkey, she told the young Jesus about the home to which they were going. He asked a thousand questions, as children will: were there Pyramids in Nazareth? was there a Sphinx? did the people worship cats and cows in the temples? and did they make their dead friends into mummies, as in Egypt? To all these questions Mary answered that Nazareth was a very different place to Egypt; that there were no Pyramids, no Sphinxes there; that the people worshipped only the one God, Jehovah; and that they would think it wicked to make dead friends into mummies.

From all this we see that the young Jesus, though he was the son of God and the promised Messiah of the Jews, was at that time only a dear child, with all a child's thoughts and wonderings about strange places. And this is one reason the more why we love him so much; because, if he had not been human as well as divine, he could not have become the teacher of the world. Joseph and Mary could learn things from an angel, so transparent that he did not even cast a shadow behind him; but the great mass of people love Jesus most because he was also a man—who had once been a child,

and had asked questions of his mother, the same as other children.

When at last they came to the green road which led into their own village of Nazareth, they stood still and gazed about them. Everything was the same—and yet it did not seem the same. It seemed to them that the hills were not so high, that the streams were less wide; and every dear familiar thing looked smaller than of old. This was because they had stayed so long in the splendid land of Egypt, where everything was large, and even the horizon seemed vaster than in other places. For a moment Mary felt disappointed with Nazareth, the home to which she had looked forward with so much longing; and then the old love of it came back to her stronger than ever. You may not understand this now; but when you are grown up, and have been away on some long journey to a great and splendid land, and at last come back to your own home and find it smaller than you had thought—then perhaps you will think of Mary, the mother of Jesus, and understand her feelings when she came back to Nazareth.

The reason why I am telling you these stories, is because I want you to feel well acquainted with Joseph and Mary and the young Jesus; because I want you to love them, as if they were your intimate friends—not far-off people that you only read about in books.

They went straight to the house which still belonged to Joseph, and they found that nothing had been changed there during all the years they had been away. The large flat stone, with one corner broken off, which served as a doorstep, was still in its old place. The dusty-green olive-tree still stood beside the house; and as the family came up the path, a cloud of pigeons alighted at their feet, cooing. One of them, tamer than the others, rested

for a moment on the shoulder of the little Jesus, as if welcoming him to Galilee.

That night all their old friends and neighbours came to see them. The return of the Holy Family from Egypt was a great event in Nazareth, and every one wanted to learn about the strange country where they had lived so long. The young Jesus sat up with the others until a late hour. Was he not now a large, strong boy of seven years? He told these old friends of his parents how the Egyptian women, who worshipped animals, had wanted to take his own pet kitten and make a god of it. The kitten, now a cat, he had been obliged to leave in Egypt; for cats love places more than people, and will not follow any master—not even a seven-year-old Jesus.

His mother was surprised to hear him tell these men and women, whom he had never seen before, all about the land of Egypt. Sometimes, in speaking of an object, by mistake he used the Egyptian word for it instead of the Jewish word; for he had spoken the Egyptian language with his little dark-skinned playmates since he could speak at all. It seemed strange to the simple dwellers in Nazareth that a little Jewish boy of seven should be able to speak a foreign tongue. Of course they did not know that this boy was the promised Messiah of the Jews, and Mary did not dare to tell them. She wanted him to have a happy childhood, just like other children.

And when the friends and neighbours, saying good-by at a late hour, told Mary that her boy was the most wonderful child they had ever seen, she was just as pleased as if she had not known it all along. She even tried to think of some little fault of his, that these other mothers might not be jealous for their own children; but she could not think of the tiniest fault—because he had none.

Jesus continued to live happily with his parents in the house at Nazareth. Part of the house was Joseph's carpenter shop, and the boy used to play there. He loved the fresh smell of the sawdust and the shavings; he loved to hear his father's plane go whistling over the long planks, as he planed them into smoothness; he loved to watch him cutting out the wooden ploughs, with which the people of Galilee turned up the earth before the planting time. And Jesus used to help his father in many little ways. Sometimes he held a board for him, which did not really need to be held at all; sometimes he gathered up all the shavings and put them in a neat pile in the corner; sometimes he would tie a bunch of wild-flowers to the handle of his father's plane—that their sweet perfume might make it easier for him to work. The good Joseph always thanked the boy for these attentions, and when the bouquet of wildflowers, tied to his plane, was so large as to be in his way, he would put the flowers in a bowl of water—to keep them fresh, as he told the little Jesus.

But of all the flowers of Galilee the boy loved best the lilies. And now, after nearly two thousand years, when we see great white lilies in a church, we like to think that they are placed there because Jesus cared for them so much. Can you not see him now in imagination, a little boy beside some quiet pond in Galilee, gathering an armful of these lovely flowers to carry home to his mother?

It seemed to Mary that he grew more beautiful every day. Sometimes when she looked at him she trembled with that nameless fear which mothers feel—lest some unkind wind should blow upon him too roughly; lest some unlucky star, like those which the three wise men from the East believed in, should stay too long in the

heavens above his head. And at night, after he had gone to sleep, she used to watch over him a long time, thinking of those words from the Song of Solomon: "My beloved is white and ruddy, the chiefest among ten thousand. . . . As the apple-tree among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved among the sons."

Like all children, Jesus loved stories; and he would sit for hours at the feet of his mother while she told him stories from the Jewish Bible, the Old Testament, as we call it. We must remember that in those days there was no New Testament; the New Testament was written by the friends and followers of Jesus long years afterward, to tell the world about his life.

Of all the old stories, perhaps Jesus liked best those about David, the shepherd boy who became King of Israel. He loved to hear his mother tell how David played the harp to cheer King Saul, when he was heavy-hearted.

All boys like stories about giants, and Mary used to tell Jesus about the terrible Philistine giant, Goliath, of whom all the Jews were afraid in the time of King Saul; for Goliath was nearly twice as tall as any of the other men, and was all dressed in brass from head to feet, so that only his face could be seen. She used to tell him how the young David, who was small and slender, said to King Saul that he would go out alone and fight the giant; and when King Saul was astonished that a mere boy should dare to do what the strongest men were fearful to attempt, David reminded him how he had killed a lion and a bear which had come to steal the sheep he tended; and David said that the God who had saved him from the lion and the bear would save him also from this giant. And Mary told Jesus how David, clad in his shepherd's dress, went out to fight the giant, who was

dressed all in brass, taking only for weapons five little stones from the brook; how Goliath, enraged that a mere stripling had come out to fight him, drew near to David; how David, as he ran forward, drew a stone from his shepherd's bag and threw it at the forehead of the giant, knocking him senseless; how he then ran to the fallen giant, and drawing Goliath's own sword from its scabbard, cut off the giant's head.

We may be sure, from what we know of Jesus in his after life, that he asked his mother why David did not go and play his harp to the giant Goliath, as he had played it to the melancholy Saul, and make the giant love him as Saul did.

Mary told Jesus many other stories of the Jews, and in all of them there was much about fighting and killing, and very little about loving one another. She told him the stories just as they had been told to her; but the little Jesus always wanted to know *why* people did the things they did. He wanted to understand their hearts, as God must understand them; and always, when a man in one of these old stories had done a wicked thing, the boy was sure that it was because the wicked man had known no better, and because nobody had ever loved him enough.

These loving thoughts, so familiar to us who have learned them from the teachings of Jesus, were new thoughts at that time, nineteen hundred years ago, when Jesus was a little boy. He was the first of all the Jews who had ever looked at things in just that way; the first who had believed that love was stronger than an army of soldiers, and that the surest way to make a bad man good was to be kind to him. These ideas were new even to Mary, the gentle Jewish mother; and she was always wondering at the questions Jesus asked her. She used some-

times to tell her husband that the little boy really taught her more than she taught him.

After a few more years Jesus learned to help his father in other ways than by tying wildflowers to his plane, and gathering all his shavings into neat piles in the corner. He learned to work with Joseph in the shop, and when he was ten years old he could plane a board to satin smoothness, and could paint a chest as neatly as his father. Whatever the young Jesus undertook to do, he always did it better than any of the other boys of Nazareth could have done; but he did not like to show his work to these young friends, for fear they would feel sorry and ashamed that it was so much superior to theirs. For Jesus the pleasure was in doing a thing, and not in boasting about it.

By the time he was twelve years old he knew all the Old Testament stories which Joseph and Mary knew, and could repeat them as well as his parents could. But always, in telling these familiar histories, he used to give the reasons why people acted as they did—the reasons he had himself discovered by thinking so much about the hearts of others. He knew why God did not let Moses go into the Promised Land, but only let him view it from afar, after those forty years of wandering in the wilderness. He knew why the old King who wrote the Book of Ecclesiastes had such a bitter and disappointed view of life. He knew all the feelings of the little boy Samuel, son of Hannah, who served in the temple with the old priest Eli, that time when the Lord called him in the night, and when he had afterward to tell his old friend and teacher Eli how God was wroth with Eli's house because of the wickedness of his sons. The Jews had listened to this story all their lives; but none of them before had ever thought to wonder what were the feelings of the

little Samuel. Yet Jesus could have told them this, and many other unknown things besides, before he was even twelve years old.

Now the year after he was twelve he set out for Jerusalem, with his father and mother and many of their friends and neighbours, to celebrate the feast of the Passover. The boy had never been to Jerusalem before, though his parents were in the habit of going every year; but he was now so large that Joseph and Mary thought he was quite able to walk the whole of the long distance, some sixty miles. For the mother had to ride on the one donkey which Joseph owned.

It was a charming journey for the boy, over the hills and through the valleys. The season was the springtime, when the earth is everywhere at her loveliest; the little brooks babbled beside the road, the birds sang in the trees, and there were flowers on every side. We are told that the road which they took was the very one which now goes through Ginæa and Shechem, passing near the old sanctuaries of Shiloh and Bethel. The way was so long that they had to pass several nights on the road, camping in the fields.

One sympathetic writer, whose great book you will read, perhaps, some day, says of the last halting-place, where they camped the night before coming to Jerusalem: "It is a melancholy and yet charming spot. The valley is narrow and sombre, while a dark stream issues from the rocks full of tombs, which form the banks of the stream. It is, I believe, 'the valley of tears,' or of dropping waters, which is sung of as one of the stations on the way in the delightful eighty-fourth Psalm."

We can imagine the twelve-year-old Jesus, going away alone and walking under the stars, charmed with the beauty of this spot, and thinking of the splendours of

the city of Jerusalem which he would see on the morrow—the Holy City with its great Temple, where would be gathered thousands of his fellow-countrymen, to celebrate the feast of the Passover.

Perhaps I had better tell you what the Passover means, and why the Jews always made a feast on that memorable day. A long time before, in the days when Moses and many other Jews were in the land of Egypt, God was wroth with the Egyptians because of their evil doings and their hardness of heart, and because they would not let the Jews go away, as they desired. And He had sent many plagues upon the Egyptians—to remind them that He was God, the All-powerful One, the Creator of the world, and the friend of the Jews. God had turned all the rivers and pools of Egypt into blood, so that the fishes died and the people had no water to drink. He had sent the plague of frogs over all the land of Egypt, so that from every stream these slimy reptiles came up and troubled the people. He had sent grievous swarms of flies into the house of Pharaoh, King of Egypt, and into his servants' houses, and into all the country, and the land was corrupted by reason of the swarms of flies. He had sent a plague upon all the cattle of the Egyptians so that they died; but the cattle of the Jews did not die. He had sent the plague of boils, so that all the Egyptians were covered with sores. He had sent the plague of hail and thunder, so that every one in the fields was killed, and trees and shrubs were broken, and fire ran along the ground. He had sent the plague of locusts, so that the land was covered with them and the air was full of them, and the people could not even see the earth, and the locusts ate all the green things which the hail had spared. And still Pharaoh, King of Egypt, would not let the Jews go away.

Then God told Moses that He would send a plague upon Egypt which should kill the first-born of every family, from that of Pharaoh the King to the lowest of his servants, and that a great cry should go up from the land of Egypt, such as never had been heard before and never would be heard again.

And God told Moses that on the tenth day of the month every family of the Jews should take a lamb without blemish, a male of the first year; that they should feed and keep the lamb until the fourteenth day of the month, and should kill it in the evening of that day; that they should take the blood of the lamb and strike it on the two side posts and on the upper doorpost of their houses; that they should eat the flesh of the lamb that night, roasted with fire, with unleavened bread and bitter herbs they should eat it, and that whatever remained of the meat in the morning should be burned with fire. God said that they should eat this feast with their loins girded, their shoes upon their feet, and their staff in their hand; that they should eat it in haste—for it was the Lord's passover.

For God told Moses that He would pass through the land of Egypt that night and smite all the first-born of the Egyptians, from King Pharaoh downward; but that when He saw the blood upon the doorposts of the Jews, He would *pass over* those houses and leave their first-born alive; and that day should be unto the Jews a memorial, which they should keep generation after generation as an ordinance forever.

And God did that night as He had said. He went through the land of Egypt and smote all the first-born of the Egyptians, from the first-born of Pharaoh, who sat upon the throne, to those of the captives that were in the dungeons, so that there was not a house where there was not one dead.

And then Pharaoh let the Jews go away, as they desired; for he saw that God was God, the Creator of the world and the friend of the Jews. And from that time to this, the Jews all over the world have kept that day as the Passover, and have celebrated it in the way which God commanded.

It was to keep this memorable feast that Joseph and Mary, with the young Jesus, went up to Jerusalem in the spring of the year after he was twelve years old.

When the boy awoke on the last morning of their journey, and realised that that very day he would see the city of Jerusalem, with its Temple and its splendid courts, he trembled with anticipation. Young as he was, he loved God with an intense devotion; and, among the Jews, the great Temple at Jerusalem was called "the House of God." Jesus felt as if he were really coming into the presence of his Heavenly Father, the Creator of the Universe. He wondered why the older people around him could seem so indifferent; and when he heard two men talking together about the barley crops in Galilee that year, he was amazed at them. How could they think about such things, when they were within a few hours' journey of the House of God!

It was a lovely morning, clear and sunshiny, with a soft breeze from the west. The country just north of Jerusalem is not beautiful; but Jesus, who was usually so sensitive to Nature, was hardly conscious of the barrenness of the region through which they passed. His thoughts were on the Temple.

When they came to the outer porches of the Temple, with their rows of pillars and their marble pavements, the boy was so happy that he thrilled all over, for he felt that he was coming home to God. And when he heard

the music of the harps, the viols and the dulcimers, he thought the angels of heaven were singing to him. In entering this place he forgot the Pyramids of Egypt, forgot the Sphinx and all the other wonders of the far-away land where he had dwelt so long; he thought only of the Jews, his own people, and of the God of the Jews—his Father.

When he saw the great brazen gates of the Temple, so heavy that it took twenty porters to open and close them, they seemed to him to be the gates of heaven. In after years he knew, and taught the people, that the gate of heaven is only in the heart and not in any earthly temple, and that each man must open it for himself; but we must remember that he was now only a boy, twelve years of age, with a sublime imagination. And though he was the son of God, whom God had sent to the Jews as their Messiah, he had to grow up, like any other boy, and gradually learn for himself all that he was afterward to teach the world.

Can we imagine what the feelings of the young Jesus were, when he heard the musicians of the Temple singing the verses of those sweet Psalms which predict the coming of the Christ?

“Thou art my son; this day have I begotten thee.

“Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession.

“I will make thy name to be remembered in all generations; therefore shall the people praise thee for ever and ever.

“Princes shall come out of Egypt; Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands unto God.

“I will praise the name of God with a song, and will magnify him with thanksgiving.

*“He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass:
as showers that water the earth.*

*“His name shall endure forever; his name shall be continued as long as the sun: and men shall be blessed in him:
all nations shall call him blessed.*

“The voice of rejoicing and salvation is in the tabernacles of the righteous.

“The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner.”

Did he realise, a boy twelve years of age, standing there in the court of the Temple, that he was himself the one whose coming had been predicted in these old Psalms which had been sung for generation after generation by the sad and persecuted Jews? Did he really know already that he was the Messiah? I cannot tell you, and no one else in all the world can tell you. A poet has said that the thoughts of youth are long, long thoughts; but who shall dare to say just when the knowledge that he was the Christ was given to the young Jesus?

And was it not strange that among all these Jews gathered there in Jerusalem for the feast of the Passover, to eat the lamb without blemish, as God had commanded them in the time of Moses, no one (except Mary and Joseph) knew that the young boy with the beautiful shining face and the deep eyes, who stood so quietly among them, was the One whom they believed that they were waiting for? If any one had told them, they would not have accepted it.

The young Jesus could not see all of the Temple at Jerusalem, because there were places where only the priests were considered pure enough to go. There was the Holy Place, where stood the altar of incense, with the table of shewbread on one side and the golden candlestick on the other. And there was the Holy of Holies,

the innermost place which was entered only once a year, on the Day of Atonement, and where stood the Ark of the Covenant, the greatest treasure of the Jews and their most sacred thing. The Ark of the Covenant was a chest made of acacia wood, covered with gold; and over the lid of it, which was called "the mercy seat," two cherubim (or angels) extended their wings. In the Ark were kept the two tablets of stone on which were written the Ten Commandments, which God had delivered to Moses on Mount Sinai, thousands of years before. And between the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies there was a thick veil, too sacred for any one to touch except the High Priest. It was called the Veil of the Temple.

It seems strange to us that Jesus could not enter this place. But the Jews were very rigid in the observance of their ancient laws, and the High Priest had great authority at Jerusalem. He would have been shocked had a young boy asked him to be allowed to enter the Holy of Holies and to look upon the Ark of the Covenant. But we may be sure that Jesus thought much about this sacred place where he could not go. And he must have longed intensely to raise the Veil of the Temple which hid the Ark of the Covenant from his sight.

The time of their sojourn in Jerusalem went swiftly by, and the great day of the feast of the Passover came and went. Then all the Jews who lived in other cities made ready to go home again; and on another bright spring day, like the one on which they had entered Jerusalem, they all started for their homes. And Joseph and Mary started with them.

It was not until after they had gone a whole day's journey from Jerusalem that Joseph and Mary discovered that Jesus was not with the company of Nazarenes. Though they had not seen him all day long, they had

supposed he was a little way behind, with some of their friends and neighbours. But when they came to the place where they were to camp that first night, and discovered that Jesus was nowhere to be seen, the father and mother were terribly alarmed. Their little boy, their precious Jesus, whom God had intrusted to them, was lost! We can imagine the distress of Mary and Joseph. How could God ever forgive them, they thought, if anything were to happen to the child?

They did not even stop to rest, but started back toward Jerusalem, travelling all night by the light of the stars. They did not know that they were tired, so anxious were they and so frightened. As she rode slowly back toward the Holy City, on the weary, stumbling donkey, Mary's eyes were blinded with tears. She must have wondered why the angel did not appear to her now and tell her where Jesus was; but if she called upon the angel, he did not answer.

When, finally, they reached Jerusalem, they went from house to house among the people they knew, asking everybody if they had seen the child. But no one had seen him. They must even have appealed to the Roman guards; but the Romans in Jerusalem did not love the Jews whom they helped their Emperor to oppress, and the loss of one Jewish child was not a matter of any importance to them.

Poor Mary! This was the first real suffering that she had known in her life; and when Joseph tried to comfort her, he could not think of any words to say, for he was almost as unhappy as she. They remembered how King Herod, twelve years before, had conspired against the young child's life; but the old Herod was dead now, and the King who ruled in his stead must long ago have forgotten the story about the wise men from the East, who

had come to Jerusalem with tidings of a wonderful child whose birth had been revealed to them by a star. But where could Jesus be?

At last, after three days of such anxiety as only mothers of lost children know, Mary and Joseph found Jesus. They found him in the great Temple itself, among the priests and the learned doctors.

It seems that Jesus had not been satisfied with what he had seen and learned at Jerusalem during the days before the feast of the Passover. A thousand questions arose in his young mind, to which he could find no answers. Why was only the High Priest allowed to lift the veil before the Holy of Holies? What was the meaning of the golden candlestick which stood beside the altar of incense? Why did it have seven branches? What made the High Priest so holy that he could stand in the presence of the Ark of the Covenant? What really were the prophesies about the coming Messiah? Where did the old books say that he would be born? At Bethlehem? Why, *he* had been born at Bethlehem! What was the meaning of that verse in one of the Psalms he had heard sung: "The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner?" Did it mean that the Jews, the builders of the nation, would refuse to accept the Christ when he should come?

When Joseph and Mary at last found Jesus, sitting in the Temple among the priests and the doctors, he was hearing them and asking them questions. His face shone with a light which his mother had never seen there, beautiful as he had always been. His eyes were more brilliant, and there was about him a look of power that was new and bewildering to her.

"My son," she said, "why hast thou thus dealt with us? Behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing."

And Jesus answered her, very gently: "How is it that ye sought me? Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?"

But his mother did not understand all that was hidden in the boy's words, for she did not know of the questions which had been puzzling him for many days. And she did not know all that had been revealed to him by the answers of the priests and the doctors concerning the prophesies of the Messiah.

Jesus went quietly home with his parents to Nazareth, as if nothing unusual had happened; and he was gentler and more obedient than ever, and no one could tell exactly what was passing in his mind. The mother wondered if he knew already the great destiny that was in store for him when he should be a man?

CHAPTER VI

THE VOICE CRYING IN THE WILDERNESS

Imagine, now, that some eighteen years have passed since the young Jesus was found by his parents in the Temple at Jerusalem, talking with the priests and doctors. Jesus is now a man; but it is not about Jesus that I am going to tell you in the beginning of this story. I will tell you about John the Baptist.

You remember how, in the very first of these stories, when Mary had learned from the annunciation angel that she was chosen by God to be the mother of the future Christ, she made a journey to the south to visit her cousin Elizabeth, who lived not far from Jerusalem.

Soon after this visit, a son had been born to Mary's cousin Elizabeth, and they had called his name John. Now John was a few months older than Jesus, and he was a cousin of his. But, as their homes were far apart, they had not seen much of each other. Of course they had met sometimes in Jerusalem, at the annual feast of the Passover, and each must have made the other an occasional visit; but their lives had been separate. The two boys had been very different, and the two men were equally different. Jesus was all gentleness and love and sympathy; John was stern and cold and solitary. Jesus loved to wander among the pleasant hills and the blossoming valleys of Galilee; while the favourite walking place of the solitary John was the stony and arid desert of Judæa, in the neighbourhood of Jerusalem.

I tell you again, so that you may not forget it, that some eighteen years had passed since our last story. There was another emperor in Rome, another Roman governor in Judæa.

About this time, the people of Jerusalem heard much of a strange man, tall and gaunt, who used to wander alone in the wilderness of Judæa, and farther east along the Jordan river. He was dressed in a single and scanty garment of camel's hair, a leather strap was around his waist, and his food was locusts and wild honey. His long black hair hung loose and matted over his shoulders, his eyes were stern and wild; and often, in the solitary night, some lonely person walking under the stars would hear a voice crying in the wilderness: "Repent ye, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand."

At other times the tall gaunt man would appear in the streets of Jerusalem, when they were crowded with people, still crying in the same loud voice: "Repent ye, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand." As you have probably supposed, this strange man was John, the cousin of Jesus.

Now John had been alone so much in the wilderness, that the Word of God had been revealed to him there, and he had come to understand that the time was ripe for the Messiah of the Jews to appear upon the earth. There is always a strange power in desert places; and if a man like John, desiring intensely to do God's will, goes out alone into the desert and passes many days and nights, sometimes—only sometimes—God can make known to him there things hidden from the world of other men.

As we know, for many hundreds of years the Jews had been looking for their Messiah; but John was the first to tell them that the Messiah was indeed come, already. The old prophets had written that God said to his son,

the Messiah, who was then unborn: "Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee." And John, who had read these words so many times in the Scriptures, knew now that he was himself the messenger whom God had sent to tell the people that the Christ had come. Can we wonder that, knowing this, he was indifferent to such things as clothes and food; that the one garment of camel's hair, girt about the waist with a leather strap, should seem quite good enough for him; and that locusts and wild honey should be all the food he wanted? When a man's heart is full of a great idea, as John's was, sometimes he forgets to eat.

Many people, seeing and hearing John, who was so different to themselves, believed that he was the old Jewish prophet Elias—risen from the dead. We must remember that the Jews were very unhappy under the Roman rule, and that they believed that God would some time raise the old prophet from his grave to help them. As they were now more oppressed by the Romans than ever before, why, they wondered, should not God raise Elias now? And it was this idea which, more than any other, made them follow John and listen to him, when he said: "Repent ye, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand."

When men asked John what they should do to repent and be forgiven of their sins, he answered that every man who had two coats should give one of them to his neighbour who had none; and that every man who had meat to eat should give some of it to other men who were hungry. When the publicans, who were the tax collectors, asked what they should do to be forgiven by God, John told them to take no more money from their neighbours in taxes than what the Roman governor forced them

to take. When the soldiers asked what they should do, he answered that they must not harm any man. And then he would always add: "Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight." For ever in the mind of John was the idea that the Lord Christ was somewhere in the world already, and that he should see him soon.

John himself believed so firmly that he was sent to prepare the way of the Christ, that hundreds of other persons believed it, too; and great numbers of them came out to him, on the banks of the Jordan river and the Dead Sea, and confessed their sins. And when John saw that the people were honestly sorry for all the wicked things which they had done, he baptised them in the river Jordan, and told them to live a new life. It was because of this that they called him John the Baptist, the baptism in the river being to them a sign that God believed in their repentance and would forgive them.

But when others who were not honest, such as the Pharisees and the Sadducees, came to his baptism, John answered them with great severity, telling them that every tree which did not bring forth good fruit should be cut down and cast into the fire. He meant by this to compare them to trees which bore no fruit; for the Pharisees and Sadducees, while they talked a great deal about their religion, did not seem to think that kindness to others had anything to do with it.

There are many like them at the present day. For if a man really loves God, he will want to do good to his fellow beings; and if a man has only bad things to say of his neighbours, it is hard to believe that he loves God. Even a child who really loves God will sometimes give one of his toys to a poor child who has nothing to play with. When we give things to the poor we lend them to God.

Only a few months before that time, no one had ever heard of John, except a few of his friends and neighbours; but now he was one of the most famous men in Judæa—all because of his preaching and baptism. And he had many disciples, that is to say, he had many friends who believed in him, and who followed him everywhere, living as he did in the wilderness and eating very little food.

Seeing him so surrounded with disciples, some men even wondered if John himself were not the Messiah who was to come; but John always denied this. He said:

"I indeed baptise you with water; but one mightier than I cometh, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose: he will baptise you with the Holy Ghost and with fire."

When John said that, men began to understand what he really meant: that Christ had come already, and that he was somewhere at that moment among the Jewish people. And they wondered who it could be. Was it anybody they knew? Was it anybody in Jerusalem? What would the Messiah do, if he were really come? Would he free them from the Roman rule? Would he make himself King of the Jews, and sit upon the throne of Herod? Would he perform miracles?

No one dreamed that the Messiah could be the young Jesus of Nazareth, who sometimes came down to Jerusalem to attend the feasts. In fact, few men had even heard of Jesus at that time.

And now we will leave John for a little while, preaching to the people in the wilderness of Judæa and baptising them in the river Jordan. We will leave John and go up to Nazareth in Galilee, where Jesus lived.

I have told you much about Jesus when he was a little boy; but you must think of him now as a man, about thirty years old, tall and strong and beautiful, with a

look of love in his eyes such as no one had ever seen before, and a voice so kind and gentle that every one loved to listen to it. Joseph the carpenter, who had been such a good father and husband, was now dead, and Mary and Jesus lived alone in the little house at Nazareth, surrounded by their friends and neighbours. It is often true that when we have lived near a person all our lives, we do not know how beautiful and good that person really is; and the neighbours of Jesus had no idea that he was the greatest man in the world. They had seen him for years, working in the carpenter shop of Joseph; or walking quietly through the narrow and stony streets, followed by the children; or coming down alone from the hills beyond the town where he loved to roam in the early morning or the late evening. They had grown accustomed to asking his advice and help when they were in any trouble; but it had always been as a friend and neighbour that they appealed to him—never as the Messiah of the Jews.

And when Jesus first began to speak to other men about God and their duties to Him and to one another, the people in his own town did not specially care to hear him. So he went to the little villages round about, where the men and women listened gladly when he spoke to them about God. For he was very gentle, and it seemed to them that he must have some beautiful secret hidden in his heart, because his eyes were so loving and he smiled so sweetly upon all the world. Sometimes, when he did not know that any one was looking at him, a wonderful light would suddenly come into his face, and they who saw it knew that he was thinking of God.

Already a few men had begun to follow Jesus about from place to place, as other men followed John the Baptist. They loved to hear the beautiful things he said,

and, most of all, they loved to be near him, because they were so happy in his presence. But even these friends, who were already his disciples, though they did not realise it—even these did not know yet that he was the Messiah. So far, he had never told them that he was different to other men; but it was because they felt, somehow, that he *was* different, that they followed him.

About this time the people in the little towns of Galilee, in the north, began to hear much of the strange man whose voice was always crying in the wilderness of Judæa, “Repent ye, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.” When Jesus heard about John and his preaching and baptism, he knew that the time had come for him to announce that he was the Christ. For had not the old prophets said, as being the words of God to the Messiah when he should come: “Behold, I will send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee.” And John had now prepared his way.

But, as we can imagine, it was hard for Jesus to tell these friends, who loved him for himself as a man, that he was after all something very much greater than a mere man. He knew that they had to be told; but, with all his wisdom, he did not know how to tell them. So, as he understood now that John the Baptist was the messenger whom God had chosen to send before his face, to prepare the way before him, he felt that it would be better if John the Baptist should announce to the world that Jesus was the Messiah.

So he asked his friends to come with him down to Judea, where John was preaching and baptising beside the Jordan. He did not know in just what way the announcement of his Messiahship would come; but he felt that God would bring it about in the one best way, whatever that might be.

There was one young friend with him, John, the son of Zebedee, to whom it would have been easy for Jesus to tell anything. For the young John was very gentle and beautiful, and he loved Jesus much.

You must always remember, in reading the stories which follow, that the young John, son of Zebedee, was a different person to John the Baptist. As Jesus had these two friends who were both named John, it is necessary to keep them distinct from each other in your mind.

Now when Jesus, with his friends, came down to the place where John the Baptist was preaching and baptising by the river Jordan, there was a large company assembled; for many had come out from Jerusalem and the smaller cities round about. John had probably seen Jesus in the crowd, for in his sermon that day he said:

“There standeth one among you whom ye know not; he it is, who coming after me is preferred before me, whose shoe’s latchet I am not worthy to unloose.” And everybody wondered who John meant.

After the sermon, one by one the people went down to the place where John was standing in the water, and asked him to baptise them. There were old people and young people, men, women, and even children, who confessed their sins and asked for the rite of baptism. The multitudes in all the country round had been thoroughly aroused by the preaching of this strange man, John, so tall and dark and fiery looking, robed in his garment of camel’s hair and with his long black locks hanging on his shoulders. They did not understand him; but they felt that he knew something which they did not know, and many of them were sincerely sorry for their sins, and hoped with all their hearts that the promised Messiah had really come.

We can picture the scene: the shore of the river

crowded with men and women, dressed in their strange Oriental garments of many colours, so different to those we wear; the bright sun shining down upon them all, showing here and there a fresh, young, earnest face, alight with enthusiasm; here and there also an old, keen, crafty face, darkened with unbelief—for not every one who came out to hear John and to see the baptism really had faith in him; and down at the foot of the crowded shore, the blue river, glittering in the sunshine; and out there in the water the tall form of the preacher, John.

Jesus was standing there in the crowd, a little way back from the river. He had noticed how, when John said that there was one standing among them whom they knew not, whose shoe's latchet he was not worthy to unloose, many had started and looked from one to another, searching with their eyes for the person whom John meant. Then Jesus had seen them go down one by one to be baptised. He had seen his own friends also go down to John in the river, and when they came up, their eyes were shining with the light of faith in God.

The heart of Jesus was very full; for he knew that the time of his long waiting was now over. The years when he had lived so peacefully in his little home at Nazareth, with the gentle Mary his mother, working in the carpenter shop and dreaming his beautiful dreams, were of the past. Before this hour, he had seemed to belong to himself and to his mother; after this hour, he would belong wholly to God and to the world. He had now to go down into the water of the Jordan, like all the others, to be baptised of John; but he knew that when he came up out of the water, he would come up as the announced Messiah of the Jews.

As he stood there on the shore, his mind went back over all the things which I have told you in these stories

about his early life. He thought of his birth in the stable at Bethlehem; for his mother had told him about the sweet-breathed cows that had come to sniff at him, a little baby wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger, and about the three wise men from the East, who had ridden into Bethlehem on their camels, bringing him gifts of gold and frankincense and myrrh—led on by the star. He thought of the enmity of King Herod, now dead, which had driven his parents to Egypt with him, when he was a newborn baby. He thought of those long years in Egypt, from the time when he could first remember anything until the day they started on the long journey back to the land of the Jews, after the death of Herod. He thought of his first visit to Jerusalem, at the time of the Passover when he was twelve years old, of the strange questions which had then arisen in his mind, of his talks with the priests and the doctors, and of how the knowledge had first come to him that he himself was the long-promised Christ. And he thought of all the years that had passed since then, years of study and labour, which had prepared him for his great work of teaching the people about God. And now, at last, that work was to begin.

Jesus waited until all the other people who desired it had been baptised, then, without looking behind him or thinking any more about the past, he went down into the water beside John, and asked for the baptism.

John was surprised. Why, he wondered, should Jesus want to be baptised? Baptism was for sinners, he thought, surely not for the Christ who had come to save sinners. And, besides, John did not feel that he was good enough to baptise Jesus. He wanted Jesus to baptise him, instead; but Jesus said no.

As you will learn, perhaps, when you are older, the

man who is really great is nearly always humble in his heart. Though Jesus knew that he was the Son of God, he was not willing to let John take the second place there, before the people whom he had baptised. Of all the beautiful acts in the life of Jesus, we can hardly think of one which shows a tenderer consideration for the natural human feelings of another. You may have to think about this before you will understand it fully; for it has puzzled many wise and good men, including the disciples who were with Jesus at that time. A smaller man than Jesus would have been pleased to push John aside and take his place here before the multitude of people; but Jesus was too great for that.

And then, perhaps, he felt that in being baptised by the noble John, he would receive at John's hands the dedication of God for the great work he had to do. He may have felt that he would be stronger after the blessing of John, even as a father sometimes feels stronger and better able to do his hard work in the world, if his little son or daughter lays a loving hand upon his face in the morning before the day's work begins.

So John baptised Jesus. We feel that the hands of John must have trembled as he laid them in blessing upon the head of the Messiah—so much greater than himself.

And then something very strange and beautiful happened. The Bible says that as Jesus came up out of the water, the heavens opened above him, and the Spirit of God, which we call the Holy Spirit, came down in the form of a dove, and rested upon the head of Jesus, as he stood there on the shore of the river. And he heard the voice of God, his Father, speaking from heaven, and saying to him:

“Thou art my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased.”

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When he heard these words Jesus wanted to be alone, that he might think quietly of the work he had to do, in teaching his fellowmen about God's love. So, leaving his friends there by the Jordan river, he went away by himself into the wilderness of Judæa. It was very still and solitary there, and he began to think of what it meant to be the Son of God.

CHAPTER VII

ALONE FOR FORTY DAYS

Have you ever been alone for half a day—absolutely alone? If so, perhaps you were lonely, perhaps you were afraid. Perhaps, too, you thought you would be glad to see any one—no matter whom—so long as they would talk to you, or even sit quietly on the other side of the room. You may have felt, though you could not have expressed the feeling, that there was something present with you—something invisible—which could see you, but which you could not see.

If you can remember such a time, you will be better able to understand the story of Jesus in the wilderness, where he remained alone for *forty days*. The wilderness of Judæa is a very barren and rocky place, and in the time of Jesus there were wild animals there. It was in this wilderness where John the Baptist had wandered, when God made him understand that the Messiah of the Jews had come into the world. It was to this same barren waste that Jesus went, to be alone with his own thoughts and with his Father in heaven. For he who really dares to be alone may learn many things in solitude; he may get acquainted with himself, and feel, though he may not see, God.

After Jesus had been baptised by John in the river Jordan, and the Spirit of God had descended upon him in the form of a dove, and the voice of God had spoken from the heavens, saying, “Thou art my beloved son, in

whom I am well pleased," Jesus had heard John telling the people who pressed around them that he, Jesus of Nazareth, was the Messiah, who had come to save the Jews.

And Jesus, who had thought about God and the work he had to do for Him these many years, felt suddenly that he had not thought about God quite enough to be able to speak of Him just as he wished to speak. So he left John and his other friends, and all the people who pressed around him asking questions, and went away alone to the wilderness. He did not take any food with him, and there was no food in the wilderness—except, perhaps, such locusts and wild honey as John the Baptist had lived on; but Jesus did not want food now. He wanted God. And he found Him in the wilderness.

The Bible does not tell us what he did there during the first days; but can we not imagine? Can we not see him by day walking over the stony ground, his beautiful head bent in thought, his eyes fixed on the future? Can we not see him at night, under the stars, lying upon the hard rock, praying that God would show him what to do for the world, which needed all the love he had to give it? Perhaps, when you have heard the preachers talk about Christ, you have not had a very clear idea of what and who he was. He may have seemed to you very shadowy and far away, and not at all like human beings. It is to make you understand how real and near he was—and is—that I am telling you these stories.

When Jesus was in the wilderness he was thinking about all the people in the world, he was loving all the souls in the universe, born and unborn, and that means our souls, too. He was studying what he could do for us, and trying to learn from God how he could do it best.

It was sometimes cold at night in the wilderness of Judæa; but Jesus was not thinking about his comfort.

When you are hungry for half an hour, remember that he was hungry for forty days. When you are alone for a little while, and impatient that some one does not come and amuse you, think of him—alone for forty days, and glad to be alone, because he had so much to think about. When a man, or even a little child, goes away alone to think about God—God is always with him.

From something which happened afterward, and which I will tell you about presently, we know that Jesus must have come to realise there in the wilderness what he had not fully realised before—not only how much he was like other men, but how different he was to them. The great souls of the world are modest; they are not always thinking of how great they are, but rather of how great and beautiful and dear other people are. You have read about Jesus as a little boy, and you have read about him as a man, in his home in Nazareth and at Jerusalem; you know how kind and gentle he was, and how much he loved the simple life of the workers in Galilee—poor people who lived by the labour of their hands. His foster-father, the good Joseph, had been only a carpenter, and Jesus himself had worked at that humble trade. He had seen the great monuments of Egypt as a little boy, and later he had seen the palace of the King at Jerusalem, and the palace of the Roman governor. There was a great difference between the little carpenter shop in Nazareth and the palace of the Herods at Jerusalem; and yet Jesus, whose home was in the carpenter's shop, had now to announce himself as some one very much more important than those who dwelt in the King's palace. In our democratic times it may not be easy to imagine how strange this seemed in those days.

In our time, should a poor young carpenter say that he was greater than the King of England, or greater than the President of the United States, the people of those countries would merely think him crazy. But in the time of Jesus, for a young carpenter in Judæa to say that he was the Messiah, meant more in the eyes of the Jews than it would mean in our day if a young man should declare himself king of the world. For was not the Messiah, in whose future coming the Jews believed, to be greater than all the kings of the world put together?

We have always taken as a matter of course that Jesus, knowing himself to be the Christ, should tell the world so when the time came; but it was not so simple as we may have supposed. We do not wonder that he wanted a little time alone to think, there in the wilderness of Judæa.

It must even have been difficult for him, brought up like any other young man, to realise himself that he was the great One whom the nation waited for. What should he do? How should he teach mankind? Of course he knew that God would show him how; but his very human questioning of himself makes him seem all the greater and all the nearer to us. For, if he had not been also a man, he could not have taught us about God.

Now we are told that during the forty days that Jesus was in the wilderness, the devil was there also sometimes, tempting him. You must often have heard of the devil; but have you any idea what the devil is? The story books picture him shaped somewhat like a man, but with horns and hoofs and a long tail; and they tell us that he is the spirit of evil. But what does the spirit of evil mean? It is not nearly so hard to understand as you have supposed, if you will begin by realising that the devil is *the opposite of God*. Everything that God is, the

devil is not. God is loving, and the devil is not. God created the world, and the devil, being His opposite, seeks to destroy it. God is true; that is why the devil, being the opposite of truth, is called the father of lies. God affirms, He says that beauty and goodness *are*; but the devil denies everything beautiful and good. If a child says that his mother loves him, that thought comes from God; but if he denies his mother's love, that thought is of the devil.

Now in the time of Jesus—and long afterward even to our own day—people believed that when a man was very good indeed, the devil was always watching for an opportunity to come and tempt him. They believed that the devil chose an hour when the man was weak, either from illness or grief, and least able to combat the devil's denial of everything good and beautiful. And then the devil would come with doubts and sneers—for sneers and doubts are always of the devil. I hope you will remember this, when you are men and women.

We are told that Jesus had not eaten anything for many days, and that he was very hungry. It was then that the devil appeared to him in the wilderness, and said:

“If thou be the son of God, command that these stones be made bread.”

This was the same as saying that if Jesus could not make bread out of stones, he was not the son of God; for the devil always reasons well. It was, of course, just at the time when Jesus had come to realise what it meant to be the son of God, when he was ready to go back to the multitude of people and tell them that he was really the Messiah, that the devil (of doubt) appeared and posed that simple suggestion: “If thou be the son of God, command that these stones be made bread.”

But Jesus, though he was hungry, did not try to turn the stones into bread. He merely said to himself, and to the devil:

"Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."

Of course the devil hoped that Jesus would try to turn the stones into bread, that he would fail in doing so, and that his faith in himself would thus be weakened. For the devil can often make a strong man weak by making the strong man doubt his own strength. What the devil was trying to do, was to make Jesus doubt that he was really the son of God. In other words, and that you may better understand, the devil dared Jesus to try to turn stones into bread.

When he found that Jesus could not be tempted in this way, the devil took him up into a high mountain, from which he could see the Temple at Jerusalem, the palace of the Herods and that of the Roman governor; and he could also see, in his imagination, all the other powerful kingdoms of the world. Now, as the devil had failed in trying to make Jesus doubt himself, he thought he might succeed in another way—by making him ambitious of worldly glory. If Jesus had wanted to be king of the world, and to live in palaces, of course he could not have fulfilled his mission as the Son of God, who had to live with the common people, to share their poverty and to love them. If Jesus had not been the Christ, but a mere man, strong in his faith in himself, the devil might have succeeded this time; for we may suppose that Jesus, who has changed the world by his religion, might have made himself a king if he had wanted to. It required greater power to do what Jesus did than to make oneself an emperor, like Cæsar or Alexander. There have been many emperors, but there has been only one Jesus.

The devil, as he pointed to the Temple and the palaces, said to Jesus:

"All this power will I give thee, and the glory of them: for that is delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will I give it. If thou therefore wilt worship me, all shall be thine."

But Jesus did not want worldly glory, and he said:

"Get thee behind me, Satan: for it is written, thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve."

Then the devil, having twice failed, tried still another way. He went down to Jerusalem, the Holy City, with Jesus, and led him up to a pinnacle of the Temple, high above the stone court—so high that if any one had fallen from that pinnacle, he would have been crushed and killed. And the devil, pretending to accept the fact that Jesus was the Christ, suggested a quick and simple way for him to prove his Messiahship to all the world. He said, pointing to the stone court below:

"If thou be the son of God, cast thyself down from hence: for it is written, he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee; and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone."

We can imagine Jesus standing there high above the city, on a pinnacle of that great Temple which had been built to celebrate the glory of God, his Father. Perhaps, as he looked down, he saw men walking far below in the courts, and looking small by reason of the distance—quiet and solemn Jews going about the business of the Temple, unaware that the Messiah had come to the world and that he stood there above them. Perhaps, for a moment, Jesus may have wondered if, should he step off the edge of the pinnacle, God's angels would not *really* bear

him up. In the exaltation of his new-found power, his consciousness of being the Son of God, the thought may well have come to him.

If such a thing could have been; if those doubting Jews had seen him come down through the air, like an angel, and alight beside them unharmed, surely they would then have believed in him.

But Jesus remembered that God rules the world by laws, and that those laws are never broken, not even by God Himself; that even so-called miracles are but profounder applications of those same laws. He realised that the thought that angels might possibly bear him up, was only another and more crafty temptation of the devil. So he answered the spirit of evil:

“It is said, thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.”

Then, seeing that Jesus had grown stronger with every temptation he had resisted, and knowing that it is only in hours of weakness that doubt and denial can triumph over faith, the devil sneaked away and left Jesus alone.

The Messiah came down from the pinnacle of the Temple and went to rejoin his friends. They had thought of nothing but him during his forty days in the wilderness alone, away from them. When they saw him coming, he looked to them like an angel. There was a wonderful light in his face, and *power* seemed to radiate from him.

Now in all the stories that I have told you before, Jesus has been merely getting ready for his life's work. But in the stories that are to come you will learn how this same Jesus, who had been a baby in the manger at Bethlehem, and a little boy in far-away Egypt among the Pyramids, and a dreamy-eyed youth walking over the hills of Galilee, became the greatest man in all the world, and did greater things than any other man had ever done.

CHAPTER VIII

THE MARRIAGE AT CANA

One of the first things Jesus did after coming out of the wilderness was to go to a wedding. But before he went to Cana, where the marriage was celebrated, he had chosen several of his disciples—those friends who were to follow him as long as he lived, and who were to be near him all the time, except when he sent them away to preach his faith in other towns.

When you have heard about the disciples of Jesus, you may have wondered how he came to have them, and why they followed him. If you can realise how beautiful Jesus was and how kind, you will understand why these friends of his were glad to leave everything else in order to be near him. Did you ever know a person, perhaps a teacher of yours, who was so lovely to you that you wanted to have him always in your sight, so lovely that you thought of him all the time when he was away, and counted the hours until you should see him again? I can remember having such a teacher, when I was a little child; and had my beautiful teacher asked me to follow her to the end of the world, I would have been very happy.

The disciples of Jesus, though they were grown men, had the hearts of children; and you know that Jesus was a very great teacher, the greatest teacher in the world. Even before he spent those forty days alone in the wilderness, he had taught his friends much about God; but

when he came out of the wilderness he had much more to teach them; and he was also gentler and more loving even than he had been before, though he had always been gentle and full of love.

In those days many persons really wanted to learn about God; they had more time than we have, for they did not hurry so from one thing to another. And when the friends of Jesus had learned from John the Baptist that the Messiah was really come—the promised Messiah they had heard about all their lives, and especially when they learned that Jesus was that Messiah, they were wild with joy. They thought of nothing else but him. They treasured every word he spoke, and they could never look at him long enough. If he asked them to do some little thing for him, they were happy; for they felt that he conferred a great favour upon them by letting them serve him. If you have ever loved any one with all your heart, you will know how they felt.

I told you in one of the earlier stories about the young John (not John the Baptist, but the other one), and how Jesus loved him so much that he could have told him anything. This young man was very gentle and affectionate, with large soft eyes, and a great faith in his teacher. In after years he wrote a beautiful story about Jesus. Now John and his elder brother James were two of those who went with Jesus to the wedding feast at Cana.

And there were several other disciples who went. The young John tells us, in his story, that the disciple Andrew, who was one of those who went to Cana, had been a disciple of John the Baptist, the man clothed in the garment of camel's hair girt about the waist with a leather strap, the man whose voice had cried in the wilderness, “Repent ye, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.”

Andrew was standing one day with his teacher, John the Baptist, and another disciple, when they saw Jesus going by. We can imagine that Jesus did not look like anybody else in the world; and that no matter where he went, everybody turned to gaze after him. He drew the hearts of men as a magnet draws needles. Perhaps, if you have ever seen a magnet, you will better understand the *attractive* power of Jesus. Now when John the Baptist saw the Master walking by, he said to Andrew and the other disciple:

"Behold, the Lamb of God."

The two disciples knew that he meant the Messiah, and they followed after Jesus. To them, the very idea of seeing the Messiah was so wonderful that they did not dare to speak to him at first; they just followed quietly.

When Jesus noticed that they were there behind him, he turned his face to them and asked them what they sought.

They called him "Master," as we would say "Teacher," and asked him where he lived.

Then Jesus took them with him to the house where he was staying, and he talked to them about God all the rest of the day. He told them that God was really the Father, as well as the Creator, of all the men in the world, and of all the women and the little children; and that God loved everybody so much that He yearned all the time to have His children love Him, too. He told them that in the heart of every one, at the very centre of them, there was a little spot where God could come and live, if they would only let Him; and that when God lived there in the heart of a man, or a woman, or a little child, they were so happy that no one who did not have God living in his heart could even imagine *how* they felt. They might be so poor they did not have enough to eat; they

might have to work all day long like a slave; they might be sick and in pain all the time; and yet, if they had let God come and live in their hearts, they did not mind hunger, or toil, or pain, because they just *felt* God there in the centre of them, loving them and telling them of His love. Their hearts seemed always to be full, not only of God, but full of love for all the world, for those who were their friends and those who were their enemies —just the same; for, knowing that everybody was really a child of God, too, whether they themselves knew it or not, these people who had God in their hearts felt that all other people were their brothers and sisters.

And Andrew and the other disciple, as they listened to Jesus, as they saw his lovely smile, and felt the love for all the world which radiated from *him*, were conscious of a strange swelling in their hearts, such a feeling as they had never had before, and they knew then that God was knocking at the door of their hearts. And they opened their hearts wide and took God in. For though God is as great as the whole universe of stars and worlds and suns, He can make Himself as small as the heart of even a little child. And whenever a little child asks God to come and live in his heart, God always comes. And then the child can nevermore be cross with any one, because God cannot be happy in the heart of any person who does not love all the world just as He does.

And Jesus asked Andrew and the other disciples to go north with him into Galilee, and he told them that he would take them with him to the marriage feast at Cana, where they should see something wonderful, which would make them understand that one who really felt himself to be the Son of God had great power, and could do whatever strange thing God wanted him to do.

And Andrew was so happy at having found the Mes-

siah, and so happy at having opened his heart for God to come and live inside him, that he thought of his brother, Simon Peter, and wanted him to be just as happy as he was. So he went and found his brother and brought him to Jesus, and Jesus told Simon Peter everything which he had told Andrew; and Simon Peter opened his heart to God also, and became a disciple of Jesus.

Next day they started north into Galilee, walking along the beautiful country roads and over the green hills. And Jesus talked with them on the way, telling them all the time something new about God.

That day he met Philip, a friend of Peter and Andrew, and called him also to be one of his disciples. And while Jesus and the others waited in one place, Philip went away by himself and found another friend of his, Nathanael, coming from under a fig-tree.

When Philip met Nathanael, he told him that they had found the Messiah, of whom Moses and the prophets had written long ago, that his name was Jesus, and that he came from Nazareth. And Nathanael answered:

“Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?”

Among the Jews there was an idea that Nazareth was a very poor place. You know that in almost every region there is some little town, or village, which the people of other towns all laugh at, for some reason or other. And often the people who live in these unpopular towns, when any one asks them where they came from, answer with just a shade of hesitation, as if they felt beforehand that they were somehow in disgrace on account of the place where they live. Perhaps God sent Jesus to live in Nazareth for that very reason, to prove that it is really a man’s heart, and not the town of his birth, that makes him superior or inferior to others. And Jesus was born poor, to teach the world not to despise poverty. And

Jesus worked with his hands, as a carpenter, that men might feel that manual labour was honourable.

So, when Nathanael said to Philip, "Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?" Philip answered, "Come and see."

For no one, by merely talking about Jesus, could make another understand how lovely he was. It would be like trying to describe a rose to a person who had never seen or smelled one.

When Jesus saw Nathanael coming, he said to him:

"Behold an Israelite, indeed, in whom is no guile!"

And when Nathanael asked Jesus how he knew him so well, never having seen him before, Jesus answered:

"Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig-tree, I saw thee."

We do not know what Nathanael had been doing under the fig-tree; but it was probably something important to him, because he was so impressed by the fact that Jesus could know of a thing which had happened out of his sight. Nathanael told Jesus then that he was indeed the Son of God, the King of Israel. But Jesus wanted men to believe in him for better reasons than because he could tell what they were doing when they were away from him, and he answered Nathanael:

"Because I said unto thee, I saw thee under the fig-tree, believest thou? Thou shalt see greater things than these."

And in a little while Nathanael did see greater things—at the marriage feast at Cana.

Among the Jews of the olden time a wedding was always a scene of great rejoicing—even more so than with us, perhaps; and all the friends and neighbours of the young couple came together to eat and drink, and to wish the bride and bridegroom long life and happiness. In

our country the marriage feast is given at the house of the bride, or that of her friends; but among the Jews of the olden time, the ceremony of marriage was performed at the bride's house, and the feast was given after dark at the home of the bridegroom.

Jesus came up through Galilee to the little town of Cana, with his new disciples, to attend the marriage of a friend. Now Mary, his mother, knew that he was coming, and she went to the wedding thinking more about her son than about the bride. She had not seen him since he went down to Jerusalem, about two months before. When he left her in Nazareth, he had been just her big son; but now she knew that John the Baptist had told people that he was the Messiah. She had also heard, from friends of Jesus who had been in Jerusalem with him, that he had gone into the wilderness of Judæa; and she was full of wonder as to what he had done there. Had he been cold? Had he been hungry? For a mother is always a mother, and thinks of her child's comfort, even though she be the mother of Christ. A neighbour who had seen Jesus a few days before in a little town to the south, had told Mary that Jesus now had disciples with him, who called him Master and seemed almost to worship him. Mary had listened with glistening eyes, with her heart full of love and a strange excitement she had never known before.

You must remember that she was no longer the young girl Mary, whom you read of in our earlier stories. She was now about fifty years old, there were white threads in her soft hair, and around her eyes the little lines which come with the passing years. She did not wear any longer the pretty red dress which she had worn in her youth, but a more sober garment. Though she was not so pretty and rosy as she had been some thirty years be-

fore, she was still very beautiful; for her face was full of love and gentleness, and love and gentleness are often more attractive than pink cheeks and pretty dimples.

When Mary saw Jesus at last, coming down the road with his disciples, and when he greeted her and told his new friends who she was, Mary was so happy that she could hardly say a word; she just looked at him, and looked, and looked. She thought of the three Magi who had come to the stable in Bethlehem when he was a new-born baby, and she wished that those wise men could see Jesus now. They had called him the King of the Jews, and surely he looked like a king this day, though he wore the same simple garments he had worn before. But his face was shining.

They all went together to the house of the bride, where the marriage ceremony was to be performed. It was late in the afternoon of a beautiful day. The bride and bridegroom stood under a canopy, they both wore crowns, and the bride wore a white veil. The Jewish elder, who performed the ceremony of marriage, stood with the bride and bridegroom under the canopy; he had a cup in his hand, which was called the cup of blessing, and he first asked God to bless the company assembled.

Then he gave a cup of wine to the bride and bridegroom, who drank of it, and promised to be faithful to each other. When the bridegroom had drunk the last of the wine, according to the ancient custom of the Jews, he dashed the cup to the floor and crushed it under his heel. This strange act was intended to remind them that perfect happiness was impossible, so long as Jerusalem, the Holy City, was ruled over by strangers. The marriage agreement was then read aloud, and all the people present drank together—which sealed the fact that they were witnesses of the marriage agreement. Then all the friends

of the bride and bridegroom—and among them Jesus, his mother and the new disciples—walked round the canopy where stood the married pair, showering them with rice and chanting the Psalms of David. At the end of the ceremony the elder asked God to bless the couple with the seven blessings of the Jews, he drank himself of the benedictory cup, and passed it round to the assembled friends.

We can imagine with what sweetness Jesus went through this beautiful ceremony, for his being the Son of God and the Messiah did not separate him from other people; instead, it drew him nearer to them. We feel sure that the bride at Cana was happy all her life, just because Jesus was at her wedding, and because he walked around her with the others chanting Psalms. Perhaps some time, when you go yourself to a wedding, you will think of this one in the little village of Galilee, and remember that Jesus walked around the bride and bridegroom, blessing them with his love.

But the strange event of the day happened later in the evening at the house of the bridegroom, where Jesus and the other friends and neighbours went to eat the marriage feast. For nearly two thousand years, people all over the world have talked of the thing which happened at the bridegroom's house, and have wondered what it meant.

It was now quite dark, and all the happy company prepared to take the bride to her new home. As they went out of doors, every one carried a lamp, according to the custom at Jewish weddings, and in a few minutes the long dark road was glittering with little lights, which moved hither and thither. To those who came last, the procession ahead looked like a long and wavering line of fireflies. Jesus was there with the others, carrying his

lamp; and the new disciples walked beside him, with their lamps, too. We may like to think that the lamp of Jesus was brighter than those of the others; but perhaps it was just the same. One of the beautiful things he taught was that *all* men were sons of God.

When they reached the bridegroom's house, they found a great feast spread for them. There were delicate meats and luscious fruits and cakes, and the pleasant wine of the country which was not so strong as our wine. The bride and bridegroom took their places at the head of the table, and the feast began, with merry laughter and talk.

We can see Jesus sitting there with the others, rather quiet and thoughtful, not wishing to draw attention to himself and his great mission on this evening when all thoughts were turned toward the new-made bride. If by his power he could serve them, or add to their happiness, that would please him well; but he would not talk even about God this evening, when every one else wanted to talk about the bride and bridegroom. Some one has said—and the saying is so true that I will repeat it here—that Jesus was the first perfect gentleman which the world ever knew, meaning by that that he was the first man, in those rougher ancient times, who always acted with delicate consideration for the feelings of others, which is really what it means to be a gentleman. And here we see the Messiah, the great man for whom the Jews had waited generation after generation, making himself one of a pleasant company; and a little later in the evening, when he performed a miracle which the world has talked about ever since, it was not done to call attention to himself, but to give pleasure to others.

The guests at this wedding-party drank much of the pleasant and almost harmless wine of the country; and

after a time, it was discovered that the wine was all consumed—that there was no more.

Mary, the mother, came and whispered to Jesus that the guests had need of wine. We do not know what was in her mind; but she must have known that Jesus, being the Messiah, could do many wonderful things, and there may have been at the back of her thoughts a hope that he would take the opportunity to prove his power before this large company. At first Jesus seems to have hesitated, for he said to his mother:

“Mine hour is not yet come.”

But Mary felt that he would do something, because she knew how much he loved to make others happy; so she said to the servants of the house that whatever Jesus asked them to do, they should do it. Jesus was thoughtful for a moment, as if he were weighing his mother’s unspoken suggestion that he should perform a miracle.

Now there were standing not far from the table six large waterpots of stone. Jesus arose from the place where he was sitting, and said to the servants of the house, “Fill the waterpots with water.” And they filled them to the brim.

The Bible does not tell us just what Jesus did as he stood there beside the waterpots; but he may have whispered words of power, reminding himself that he was the Messiah, the Son of God, with control over all the elements of the earth. He may have spoken to the water, as if it could understand him, and could change itself at his command.

After a moment he turned again to the servants of the house, and told them to draw out the fluid that was in the waterpots and to take it to the governor of the feast. And the servants did as Jesus told them. And the ruler of the feast did not know what Jesus had done to the

water; but the servants knew. And when the ruler of the feast tasted the liquid taken from the waterpots he tasted delicious wine—far better than any he had ever drunk before.

And he called out to the bridegroom, reminding him that in the beginning of a feast the host usually served the best wine, reserving the wine which was not quite so good for a later hour, when the guests had been satisfied with drinking. "But," said he to the bridegroom, "you have reserved the best wine until now."

We are not told that Jesus said anything to the assembled guests about the miracle he had performed. Probably he sat in silence, watching them drink the wine which he had made out of pure water, knowing that by and by, when the feast was over, the servants who had seen him turn the water into wine would tell their master, and that he would tell the others, and that gradually the story would spread—to the glory of God, who could perform such miracles through His Son.

If we ask ourselves how Jesus could turn water into wine, it may have been because of the added power which he had gained by resisting the temptations of the devil in the wilderness. For a man, or even a child, grows strong with every temptation which he overcomes and puts behind him.

But the new disciples of Jesus had seen what he had done, and they now believed more firmly than ever that he was the Messiah whose coming had been foretold. And they were eager to see him do other things; for the miracle which Jesus performed at the marriage feast at Cana was only the first of a long series of miracles, which I will tell you about in the stories that are to come.

CHAPTER IX

REJECTED BY HIS NEIGHBOURS

After the marriage feast at Cana, where Jesus had turned the water into wine, and after he had been with his disciples to a few of the other little villages of Galilee, preaching the love of God and the brotherhood of men, Jesus began to feel a strong desire to see Nazareth again, the town where he had been brought up. Sometimes, when he was sitting quietly alone, a picture of the little stony streets of Nazareth would come so vividly before his mind that it seemed almost as if he were really there. He began to dream of the carpenter shop, where he had worked with Joseph, his good foster-father. He thought of the high hill beyond the town, where the breeze always blew, summer and winter, and from which he could see the beautiful outline of Mount Carmel to the west, and looking east, and north, and south, the sharp or curving forms of other hills and mountains.

And he thought of his neighbours in Nazareth, the boys and girls with whom he had played as a child, but who were now grown men and women with children of their own. He wanted *them* to be glad that their old friend was the Messiah who had come to save the Jews; he wanted to tell *them* how to open their hearts to God, so that He would come and dwell inside their breasts, and make them so happy and so loving that every day would seem a holiday and every living creature would be their brother or sister. He had made his new friends feel

these things, and now he longed to make his old friends feel the same.

So, one pleasant day in the summer of the year, Jesus found himself again in the old house in Nazareth, with his disciples. How glad his mother must have been to see him come home, and what a long and loving talk they must have had the first evening, after the friends who came with Jesus had gone to rest, and the mother and son were alone in the old garden, under the starlit sky. They had so many things to talk about. I think she must have told him again about the wise men from the East who had followed the star to Bethlehem to find him as a little baby, now thirty years ago. They must have talked about his childhood in Egypt and the strange ways of that far land. But, most of all, they talked about his future, of the great work which he was going to do for Israel and for all the world. Of course it seemed to Mary that now the Messiah was really come, all the Jews would welcome him with gladness. Had they not been looking for him thousands of years?

Jesus had learned, especially in Jerusalem before he came north to Galilee, that not all the Jews believed that he was the Messiah. Already he had had some trouble with men of his race, who were astonished that he should dare to say he was the Christ. For it is very hard for some persons to believe that a man whom *they* know, a man they can see and talk with, a man who eats and drinks like themselves, is different to or better than they are. They can understand that Moses was a great man; they can believe that Elijah was a prophet; but when a man of their own time says that he knows something which they do not know, and especially when he says that they do something which they should not do, these dull and unimaginative people always want to throw

discredit on him. And it was so with many of the Jews in regard to Jesus.

So he told his mother now that she must not expect that every one would love her son as his disciples loved him. He reminded her of what the old prophets had said, that the Messiah, when he came, would be a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.

It was hard for Mary to understand. How could they help loving him, she thought, when God had sent him to the world to save them?

But though Jesus loved the people of Nazareth with all his soul, and would gladly have suffered a hundred deaths to give them the happiness of feeling God inside their hearts, he did not know, for sure, that they would accept either God or him. He hoped so—but he did not know.

After she went to rest, Mary the mother must have lain awake a long time, thinking about her beloved son and all that he had said to her that night. She wished that her husband Joseph were alive, to comfort her if anything went wrong. Though he had been dead a long time, she could almost feel his presence in the room with her. She remembered how gentle his hands had been as he had lifted her and the baby Jesus onto the back of the donkey, the starlit night when they had started for Egypt, thirty years before. It was so hard to realise that he was dead! She wanted to talk to him about Jesus. She could talk with others about her wonderful son; but no one understood as Joseph would have understood, had he been living.

The next day was the Sabbath. The house was so very small that the disciples may have been obliged to sleep in the old carpenter shop; and we can see Jesus going out to them in the early morning, to pray with

them, and from their love to gather strength for whatever the day might bring forth. Hard tasks are always easier when those we love stand by and help us with their faith. But, on the other hand, Jesus may have feared that some of his new disciples would be discouraged if the people of Nazareth did not love him and accept him as the Messiah; and if he went out in the early dawn and prayed with them, it was to strengthen their faith—not his own.

I have told you about the young man John, with the tender eyes and the gentle voice, the disciple who loved Jesus so much. Can you not see him, with the morning sunlight on his fresh young face, as he stood there with Jesus and the other men, praying that God would reveal Himself that day to the dwellers in Nazareth?

When the hour came for the Sabbath service in the synagogue, Jesus, Mary, and the five or six disciples who were there, walked along the narrow streets to the small bare building which the Jews of Nazareth used as a place of worship. You know that a synagogue is a Jewish church; but the synagogue of Nazareth was not like the splendid churches which you may have seen in cities. It was more like some little Methodist chapel in the country districts of England or America, with a few hard benches for the worshippers to sit on, and a reading stand, or pulpit, where the speaker of the day read from the old Scriptures and tried to explain them. There was no regular preacher.

The news had already gone abroad in Nazareth that Jesus, son of Mary, had come back to the town; that he was followed by disciples who called him the Messiah; that he was said to have turned water into wine at Cana, and that he had cured many people of their sicknesses by laying his hands upon them. Old men in Nazareth who had known Jesus as a little boy, shook their heads sadly

and pointed to their foreheads, as much as to say that he must be crazy. Young men who had been brought up with Jesus and who had known him all their lives, declared that what he claimed was quite impossible—had they not seen him every day for years, and how *could* he be the Messiah? The son of Joseph and Mary! How absurd!

We may be sure that every man, woman, and child in Nazareth who was able to walk to the synagogue, was there that Sabbath morning. It was generally the custom in the little Jewish towns for the schoolmaster to read the Scriptures in the synagogue on the Sabbath, for the synagogue was also the schoolhouse. This schoolmaster was one of the “elders,” or “rulers of the synagogue,” who had special seats of honour reserved for them, and who took themselves very seriously. The most sacred parts of the service were read by a man called the delegate. This was not always the same person; and on that Sabbath morning when Jesus, with his mother and his disciples, went to the little synagogue in Nazareth, the chief shepherd, as they called the chief elder, must have asked Jesus to act as delegate for the day. You will remember that Jesus had been brought up in this town, that he had been in the habit for many years of going to this synagogue on the Sabbath, and that he may often in the past have acted as chief reader, or delegate. You should also remember that he probably knew every man, woman, and child who was in the synagogue that morning.

Now none of them had seen him since the day, a few months before, when he had left Galilee to go down to Jerusalem to hear the preaching of John the Baptist, who had first proclaimed that Jesus was the Messiah. And they were full of curiosity as to what he would say and do. The Jews were a very jealous people; and the elders

of Nazareth were resentful that a man of their own town, whom they had always regarded as one of themselves and no better than they were, should have become so famous in other towns. If the young people of Nazareth were full of disbelief in Jesus, the elders of Nazareth were full of jealousy and envy and spite. What blasphemy, they said to themselves, for this young man to claim that he was the Messiah! And when the chief elder gave Jesus the Book and asked him to read, we may be sure that he looked at Jesus very hard, as much as to say that he was giving him an opportunity to do his worst.

Mary, the gentle mother, must have trembled as she sat on her bench with the other women of the congregation. The night before she had been full of joy; but when she saw her son among these hard and skeptical old men, she was filled with anxiety. Why could they not see how beautiful he was! She may have wondered if she should have told her neighbours long ago about the visit of the angel, who had announced that her son was to be the Christ. She may have almost blamed herself for her own delicacy and fineness. But the next moment she must have realised that she had done quite right; for if she had told these same old men years before that her son was the one whom God had sent to save Israel, they would have been just as full of disbelief; and Jesus, instead of having had a youth of happiness and quiet, would have been tormented all the time.

Mary saw Jesus go into the pulpit with the Holy Book in his hands. He stood there for a moment, silent and calm. It seemed to her that he had never looked so tall. From where she sat she could see the backs of the elders on the front benches; some of them were turned sidewise, so that she saw the wrinkles at the corners of their sharp eyes, and the stern or sneering look of their old mouths,

half hidden in their grey beards. Then her glance went back to the face of Jesus, as he stood there before them so tall and so calm. She saw him open the Book, the Scripture which the chief elder had given him; he seemed to be looking for some special passage. Then in his strong, sweet voice he began to read from the prophet Esaias, and this is what he read:

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord.”

Then he closed the Book, and silently handing it to the chief elder, he sat down. The eyes of every one in the synagogue were fixed upon his face. No one moved even a finger, and the room was utterly still—so still that Mary could hear the rustling of the wind among the leaves of a tree outside the window. Then she heard Jesus say, in a voice sweeter and stronger than before:

“This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears.”

Then he began to talk to them, explaining the Scripture which he had read. For the words of the prophet Esaias had been about the Messiah who was to come, who should preach the gospel to the poor, and comfort the broken-hearted, and free the captives, and restore sight to the blind, and do many other great things. When Jesus had said, “This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears,” everybody in the synagogue understood what he meant, that *he* was the fulfilment of this prophesy; that he, whom they had known all their lives, was the one whom the great prophet Esaias had referred to, centuries ago. And though they had felt that he might say something like this, they were nevertheless astonished;

and they looked at him as if he were quite strange to them, as if they had never seen him before.

Then he went on to tell them what he wanted to do; how he hoped not only to help the Jews in their troubles, but to teach them how to open their hearts to God, that He might come and dwell in their hearts, and fill them with love for every living creature. The same beautiful things which he had told his new disciples, and which had made them follow him, Jesus told to these old neighbours of his, gathered there in the synagogue at Nazareth.

As he stopped speaking for a moment, he heard several old Jews say to the men who were next them on the benches:

“Is not this Joseph’s son? Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary? Where did he learn these things? What new wisdom is this which is given to him? How could he do the things which people say he has done?”

When Jesus heard them murmuring together, he said—still in the same sweet voice and with a patient smile—that they would probably repeat to him the old saying, “Physician, heal thyself;” that they would probably ask him why he could not do in Nazareth, his own country, the same things which he had done in other towns and cities. Then he repeated to them another old saying:

“A prophet is not without honour, but in his own country, and among his own kin, and in his own house.”

Then Jesus, knowing that they would recognise a reference to the prophets, reminded them that there were many widows in Israel in the days of Elias, when there was no rain for three years and six months and everybody was starving; but that the prophet Elias was sent only to one of them, a widow who lived in a city of Sidon. And he reminded them also that there were many lepers in Israel in the time of Eliseus the prophet, and that none

of them was healed except Naaman the Syrian. By this he meant them to understand that, though there were many inhabitants of Nazareth, and many elders in the synagogue, God had selected Jesus only to show forth His glory.

Now when the elders and other men of Nazareth heard this, they were very angry. And they rose up in their seats, and began talking all at once and threatening Jesus, who stood there quietly in the midst of them, with a sad smile on his face. For these old friends and neighbours were dear to him, even though they were so hard and bitter and unbelieving.

Mary the mother must have been frightened when she saw the men surrounding Jesus and threatening him; but she did not dare to say a word. There was a dreadful uproar in the synagogue, everybody was moving forward, trying to get to Jesus; and no one would have listened to the mother, even if she had tried to soothe them. Through the hubbub of many voices she heard the chief elder tell Jesus that he must leave Nazareth right away, that they would not have him there any longer; and all the other voices shouted yes.

Then these angry and noisy men made Jesus go out of the synagogue, and his disciples and the other people followed. Jesus did not try to stay, or even to dispute with them; for it was a part of his teaching that those who loved God should always meet violence with gentleness. When he asked them where they wanted him to go, they pointed to the brow of the hill whereon the city was built. And Jesus went that way peacefully, his disciples and the people of Nazareth still following.

When they reached the brow of the hill, which was high and rocky, these elders and other men of Nazareth tried to throw Jesus down headlong that he might be

killed—so angry were they that a man whom they had known as a child should *dare* to say he was the Son of God.

But Jesus passed quietly through the crowd with his disciples, and escaped the wrath of the men of Nazareth. For while he would not raise his hand against them, he did not mean to let himself be killed; because he had only begun the work which he had to do for God and for the Jews. Jesus must have been very sad that morning, as he passed along the road toward Capernaum, a little city near the Sea of Galilee, where he was to do many wonderful works.

The eyes of the mother were full of tears as she went back to her lonely home. She had expected so much from this visit of Jesus to Nazareth, and it had turned out so badly. She knew now that she could not live any longer among those cold and unbelieving people who had tried to kill her son, so she prepared to follow him to Capernaum. It is always hard for a woman of Mary's age to leave the house where her son has grown to manhood; but she felt that wherever Jesus was, there would her home be in the future.

As she was moving sadly about the house, a shadow fell across the doorway. Looking up, she saw the bright face of the young John, the disciple who loved Jesus so much. The Master had sent him back to fetch his mother to Capernaum.

CHAPTER X

THE FAVOURITE CITY OF JESUS

For each one of us there is some place where we work better than in other places, some city where we make friends more easily and where we find a truer happiness than anywhere else in the world. For Jesus that congenial spot was the little city of Capernaum, near the sea of Galilee. This was the home of Peter and Andrew, of James and John, and it was here that Jesus worked some of his greatest miracles. In the quiet house of Peter the Master was happy, and the dwellers in Capernaum, simple and kind-hearted beings, understood and loved him better than the people of any other place.

It was to Capernaum that he came after the unhappy experience in his home-town of Nazareth, where the men who had known him as a child refused to accept him as the Messiah of the Jews, or even as a prophet. Though the Master had been sad at Nazareth, as he drew near to the charming city by the lake the weight fell from his heart, and the power in him which had been slowly developing for many years blazed forth. He walked along the green road with his friends as a conqueror going to meet his destiny.

On the next Sabbath day he went into the synagogue at Capernaum, as he had done at Nazareth, and taught the people his beautiful new doctrine of a loving Father in heaven, of the kingdom of God which was some day to be manifest in the world, and of the true brotherhood of

men—because they are all equally the children of the Father. Nothing like this had ever been heard before in the synagogue at Capernaum. The Jews spoke often of the wrath and jealousy of God, but seldom of His love; and the scribes who taught the people were merely men learned in the Hebrew scriptures, whose hearts were generally as dry and lifeless as the parchment on which they copied the chapters of the Law.

The fame of Jesus had gone before him to Capernaum, and on that Sabbath day the synagogue was crowded with men and women, all desirous to see this young prophet whose friends proclaimed him as the Messiah. There was, of course, some incredulity; but most of the people in Capernaum were glad to listen to Jesus, whether he were really the Messiah or not. And after they had heard him speak, even the most skeptical were deeply impressed with his sincerity and power. The world assumes a new and different colour when seen through the eyes of one who believes in the beauty of the world. And Jesus did not repeat old things in a dull way, like the scribes; on the contrary, he said new things, boldly and on his own authority.

There was in the synagogue that day an unfortunate man who, according to the saying of the Jews, was possessed by an unclean spirit—that is to say, he was insane, and said and did revolting things. In those days, when a man had lost his reason it was generally believed that he was possessed by a devil, and the crazy things he did were attributed to the malice of this demon.

When Jesus had finished his sermon, this insane man—or the devil that was in him—cried out:

“Let us alone; what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? Art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art, thou Holy One of God.”

For the devils who possessed men were supposed to be afraid of prophets and of holy beings and of angels, and of all that was good and pure.

Jesus looked at the madman steadily, and in a voice of authority he said to the devil that was in him:

"Hold thy peace, and come out of him."

The unfortunate man fell on the floor of the synagogue in convulsions, and those who stood by said that the devil tore him, for he cried with a loud voice, moaning and shrieking as if he were indeed tormented by some invisible force. Jesus regarded him calmly, without saying another word; but the look of power was still in his eyes. Most of the Jews who were present gazed at Jesus, instead of at the possessed man on the floor, for they had never seen any one look as the Master did at that moment. His eyes were aflame, though he was so quiet, and the full strength of his will was directed toward the spirit of evil which had made this man, his brother and the child of God, more beastly than the animals of the field. For man, the highest of earthly beings, can become the lowest, when the soul in him loses its control of the body which should be its servant.

Gradually the convulsions ceased, the harsh voice was stilled, and the man who was no longer possessed by a devil, picked himself up from the floor. His countenance was changed, the leer had left his face, his whole person was transformed. To those who had known and pitied and avoided him for years, he seemed suddenly to have become another person. His bent back was straightened, and the eyes which had been almost too terrible to gaze into, were now quiet and wide and pure. The man was cured.

This was the first miracle which Jesus performed in Capernaum, and the men and women who beheld it were

amazed. They questioned each other, saying among themselves:

“What thing is this? what new doctrine is this? for with authority commandeth he even the unclean spirits, and they obey him.”

When the people left the synagogue they talked of nothing but Jesus and the miracle he had wrought. What manner of man was he? they asked each other. If he were not the Messiah, as his friends claimed, what could he be? Certainly, they said, no ordinary person could drive out a devil as he had done.

And his doctrine! They were still thrilling with the idea of a Father in Heaven who loved them and desired them to love one another. Could loving the Father give to other men such power as Jesus had? Would he remain long with them? Would he cure others, as he had cured the madman? They thought of this person and that who was afflicted with disease, and the new feeling of brotherhood which was already stirring in their hearts made them desire that all men who suffered should be brought to the Master. It is thus even to this day with those who have found Jesus—they want to share him with others.

When he left the synagogue Jesus went to the house of Peter, followed by those disciples whom he had already chosen. This home became the favourite resting-place of the Master. In the house of Peter, surrounded by the family of that good man—his wife, his wife’s mother and his young children—Jesus was to spend perhaps the happiest hours of his life. For peace is always happiness, even with so exalted a being as the Master from Nazareth.

When they reached the house that Sabbath day, they found that the mother-in-law of Peter was sick with a fever. This good old woman, who was ever happiest when she was serving others, could do nothing now but

lie upon her bed of pain. She could not eat, she could not sleep; but tossed restlessly from side to side. Her daughter feared that she would die.

Peter told Jesus that his wife's mother was ill. Already, after only a few weeks in his company, the sturdy fisherman of Capernaum believed that his Master could do anything he willed to do.

Jesus entered the bedchamber of the sick woman. Her face was flushed with fever, her tangled grey hair lay over the pillow, and her brilliant, feverish eyes were fixed upon the Master. In her delirium she thought he was an angel, as he stood there before her in white garments, his face illuminated by the rays of sunlight which came through the open window. Never, perhaps, had Jesus so much desired to heal any one as he desired to heal this faithful creature.

He came and stood beside her bed, he took her by the hand, and in the same way that he had commanded the demon to leave the man in the synagogue, so he now commanded the fever to leave the woman. It is hard to understand a power like that of Jesus; but after a few moments the throbbing in her temples ceased, the unnatural brilliancy of her eyes was softened, and her hand which had lain hard and hot in that of Jesus became relaxed and cool. The fever was gone; and obedient to his will as a little child, she waited for him to tell her what to do.

Still holding her hand, Jesus lifted her up. She stood upon her feet, softly smiling at her daughter and son-in-law, who had witnessed this extraordinary scene. Nothing that the Master did could really surprise Peter, but his face was aflame with joy. What a privilege was his, he felt, to be the chosen companion of a man who could say to the sick and the afflicted, "Arise," and

they arose! We may be sure that Peter embraced the good old mother of his wife, and that his honest eyes were wet with tears of happiness. The disciple, who had left his family to follow Jesus, now knew that never in the future would his long absences be blamed. For the sake of a Master who could do them service like this, the women of his household might well be willing to endure a little loneliness—even to take upon themselves for a time all the cares of the home.

The mother who had been cured now went about the work of the house as if nothing unusual had happened, and she ministered to Jesus and his disciples, preparing their food and serving it to them.

And Peter's children—young boys and girls alert with the vivid interests of youth! We can picture them in imagination, grouped about their father's Master, gazing at him with wide-open, curious eyes, and asking him questions about Nazareth and Jerusalem, as well as about the kingdom of heaven. We can believe that they hung upon his arms, or even about his neck; for children are never afraid of those who are truly great, and Jesus loved the little ones.

Through the long and happy afternoon the Master remained quietly in the house with his friends, and when the evening came and the sun had set, they brought to him all the people of Capernaum who were sick, and those who were believed to be possessed by devils, like the man in the synagogue—so many that all the inhabitants of the city were gathered together at the door of Peter, and could not come into the house because there was not room for them.

And Jesus healed those who were sick with various diseases, and he cast out the devils from those who were insane, for there were many such in Galilee. And more

and more the people wondered at him, asking each other how such things could be.

Among those who came to seek the help of Jesus was a certain centurion, a Roman officer, who had command of a hundred soldiers. This man, unlike most of the Roman officers, was much liked by the Jews, because he himself loved their nation. He had even built them a synagogue, as an evidence of his friendship. Now the centurion had a sick servant that was dear to him, and having heard of the cures which Jesus had performed in Capernaum, he came to him and said:

“Lord, my servant lieth at home sick of the palsy, grievously tormented.”

He did not suggest that Jesus should do anything. He merely stated the facts of the case, leaving everything to him. The Master said:

“I will go and heal thy servant.” Now this centurion was different to most of the Romans in Palestine. He did not feel, merely because he belonged to the ruling race, that all Jews, even the most exalted, were inferior to himself. On the contrary, he was wise and subtle enough to know that no Roman, not even the Emperor, was really the equal of this Jew, this Jesus of Nazareth, whose words were like winged flames, and whose deeds were already the main subject of conversation in Galilee. And when the Master offered to go to the centurion’s house, which was some distance away, and to heal his sick servant, the man was conscience-stricken at the thought of giving Jesus so much trouble. And he said:

“Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldst come under my roof; but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed. For I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me: and I say to this man, Go, and he

goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it."

When Jesus heard this, he marvelled. It was the same as if the man had said that the Nazarene, being Master over the powers of Nature as the centurion himself was master over his soldiers, could command the disease of palsy to depart from the afflicted servant, even at a distance, and it would depart—like a soldier sent away by his commander. Jesus said to those who followed him:

"Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel.

"And I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven. But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness."

For Jesus, who had been sent as the Messiah of the Jews, would become instead the Saviour of the Gentiles—if the Jews rejected him and his message. And he now said to the centurion:

"Go thy way; and as thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee."

The centurion went away and returned to his own house, and when he entered in at the door he saw his servant standing before him—completely cured. The promise of Jesus had been fulfilled. The great faith of the centurion had received its due reward. It is always thus with those whose faith is perfect.

At this time Jesus had not yet chosen all of his twelve disciples. One by one, and two by two, he selected them from among the men he met. The essential qualities he looked for in those who were to be his companions and helpers, were simplicity of faith, a loving heart, and strength of character.

The names of the twelve apostles were: Peter and Andrew, James and John, Philip, Bartholomew, Thomas, Matthew the publican, James the son of Alphæus (sometimes called James the lesser, to distinguish him from James the brother of John), Thaddæus, Simon the Canaanite, and Judas Iscariot. We suppose that the reason why Jesus chose twelve apostles instead of some other number, was because this number was that of the twelve ancient Tribes of Israel.

There are charming stories told of how he called this man and that from his ordinary occupation, and bade them follow him.

Simon Peter and his brother Andrew, who were among the first of his disciples, he had seen one day fishing in the sea of Galilee. Jesus was walking on the shore, and when he saw the two brothers casting their net into the sea, he said to them:

“Come ye after me, and I will make you to become fishers of *men*.¹”

And straightway they had left their nets and followed him.

That same day he had called James and John, the sons of Zebedee. These two were also fishermen, as was their father, and as Jesus had walked along the shore of the lake with Peter and Andrew, he had seen James and John in their ship, mending their net. And when Jesus told them to follow him and be his disciples, they had left their father in the ship with the hired servants, and had followed him.

It was also in Capernaum that Jesus called Matthew the publican. In Palestine a publican was a tax-collector, not, as in England, the keeper of a public-house. As the taxes demanded by the Romans were severe, and their collection was sometimes made with difficulty, these offi-

cials were hated by the Jews, who classed them with sinners and outcasts.

Jesus, who had none of this prejudice, in passing along the road with his disciples saw Matthew sitting at the receipt of customs. The man's face was honest, his eyes clear and intelligent, for it was he to whom we owe the best record we have of the actual sayings of Jesus. With that swift intuition which never failed him, the Master recognised in this publican one of those souls which could be used for the service of God, and he said to him:

"Follow me."

Matthew needed no second bidding. He had seen Jesus before and had heard him speak, and the stories which were told of the Nazarene had fired the imagination of the tax-collector. He, too, would learn of the kingdom of heaven, and would experience for himself that love of God and of his fellowmen which made the faces of Jesus and his intimate followers shine with such a soft and radiant light. And he rose up from the place where he was sitting and followed Jesus, leaving everything behind him.

And Matthew made a great feast in his house, in honour of Jesus; and when the Master and his disciples sat down at the table, there was a great company of publicans and others who sat down with them.

But the scribes and Pharisees, who in Capernaum as elsewhere were always complaining about the democratic ways of Jesus, now murmured against the disciples, saying to them:

"Why do ye eat and drink with publicans and sinners?"

"They that are whole need not a physician," replied Jesus; "but they that are sick. I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."

The scribes and Pharisees, who had come into the house of Matthew out of curiosity, now looked at the table, laden with meat and fruit and pleasant drinks. They were astonished, having an idea that prophets and religious teachers should despise all pleasure, especially that of wholesome food. And they said to Jesus:

"Why do the disciples of John the Baptist fast often, and make prayers, and likewise the disciples of the Pharisees; while thine eat and drink?"

Jesus looked around at the pleasant company of his disciples, and smiled. They were so happy to be with him! And he said to the complaining Pharisees and scribes:

"Can ye make the children of the bridechamber fast, while the bridegroom is with them? But the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then shall they fast in those days."

The disciples who heard these words caught their breath. Could it be, they asked themselves, that Jesus would ever be taken away from them? Though they had only been with him so short a time, it seemed to them now that they could not live without him. For he gave to their lives a vivid meaning and a purpose—and they loved him so! But the time was not come when Jesus wished them to dwell upon the final tragedy of his mission; he wanted them to be happy now, and the smile he gave them restored their peace of mind.

More and more the people of Capernaum gathered about Jesus, and men began to come from other cities to see him and to hear him talk and to be healed by him. He could not be alone now, even in the home of Peter, and one morning he arose very early, a long time before daylight, and went away into a solitary place and there prayed to his Father in heaven. The world was wrapped

in that great stillness which precedes the dawn, while the birds are yet asleep, and the stars still twinkle in the dark sky. It was so sweet to Jesus—this being alone with God. Though to his friends he was the Master, the greatest one of earth with power before undreamed of, when he came to his Father in heaven he was like a little child.

He prayed alone there a long time, in the stillness of the night, until the stars paled, and the dark sky became a pearly grey, and the waking birds twittered in the trees, and in the east a rosy glow crept slowly upward from the still unrisen sun.

When the dawn was fully come, the disciples of Jesus, who had been seeking for him, found him alone in that solitary place with his face upraised to the sky and to the Father. And they said to him:

“Master, all men seek for thee.”

The spirit of Jesus came back from communion with heaven to the work which lay before him on the earth. And he said to his disciples:

“Come, let us go into the next town, that I may preach there also; for therefore came I forth.”

Followed by his friends, he left the solitary place and prepared to journey into other cities. As he came out upon the road where the multitude was, one of the scribes—a man very different to the others, one who loved and obeyed the ancient law as well as copied it—came up to him and said:

“Master, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest.”

Jesus answered:

“The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man hath not where to lay his head.”

For he wanted those who followed him to follow for love’s sake only, without hope of earthly reward. His was

a mission of poverty and homelessness, a pilgrimage in quest of the kingdom of God. The Bible does not tell us whether or not the scribe followed the Master, but we believe he did.

So the little band of comrades left Capernaum, the city near the lake which Jesus loved, and went into other towns, that the Master might tell the dwellers in those towns his beautiful story of a God who was their Father, and of that coming time when all men should be brothers in the kingdom of heaven.

CHAPTER XI

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

It was on a mountain not far from Capernaum that Jesus preached his most famous sermon.

Wherever he went now he was surrounded by crowds of people, for his charm and sweetness drew men after him whether they willed to follow him or not. Though they could not have told, perhaps, what attracted them so powerfully to this young teacher with the shining eyes, it was really the love that was in his heart for all beings which stirred a responsive love in other hearts. It is always so—even with lesser men.

His twelve disciples now went with him everywhere. They surrounded him with an aureole of faith. The solid strength of Peter, the quiet goodness of James, the perfect comprehension of John for all the teachings of his Master, and the devotion of the nine others, were for Jesus an abiding help; while he was to them the living realisation of God's love for the world.

With his disciples Jesus went upon the mountain, and the multitude of people followed him. It was a perfect day; the air was pure and the sky a cloudless blue. Most days in Galilee are perfect days. The peaceful wandering life which the Master enjoyed with his friends, sleeping often under the open sky, could not have been lived in a harsher climate.

Jesus stood upon the mountain, and the people grouped themselves below him. He had taken his place on a rock,

a little above the nearest of his listeners; and as he stood there, tall and slender in white garments, his head was outlined against the vivid blue of the sky. To the multitude gazing up at him, he seemed a being from another world. They were accustomed to the dry teaching of the scribes, untouched by ardour or imagination; but the expression of a new and living faith fell from the lips of Jesus, and they listened intently. Slowly he spoke, that the meaning of every word he uttered might come home to them. He said:

“Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

“Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.

“Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.

“Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.

“Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.

“Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.

“Blessed are the peace-makers: for they shall be called the children of God.

“Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness’ sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

“Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.

“Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.”

These beautiful verses are now called the Beatitudes. We read them in a book, and even in cold black and white they seem to be alive; so we can imagine the feeling of those who heard them for the first time, heard them

spoken in the clear and thrilling voice of Jesus himself, standing there on that mountain, his eyes aflame with thought, his form outlined against the brilliant blue of the Galilean sky.

When Jesus said, "Blessed are the pure in heart," nearly every one in that vast multitude was filled with a desire to be again as a little child—simple and pure in heart. And for the moment they *were* so, because the personal influence of the Master was upon them, lifting them out of their ordinary selves and filling them with his own spirit.

The scribes had never told them that they were blessed when men reviled and persecuted them because of their faith in God. Of course—now they came to think of it—the great prophets whom they honoured and whose sayings were always on their lips, had been so persecuted in their lifetime. The words, "but things were different in those days!" which we so often hear from men and women who would make excuses for their own failure to follow the teaching of Jesus, had often been heard in Galilee with regard to the ancient prophets. For the Jews did not try to live like the prophets, any more than people in our day really try to live like Jesus, and they sometimes had the same half-guilty feelings which we have, and for the same reason.

Jesus told them that they (the Jews) were the salt of the earth; but if salt had lost its savour, he asked them, wherewith should it be salted? For the Jews at that time had lost *their* savour—the true faith and enthusiasm which had carried their ancestors through forty years of wandering with Moses in the wilderness, and had brought them at last into the Promised Land.

Jesus said to them:

"Let your light so shine before men, that they may

see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."

The Jews of the olden days had worshipped God as the great Jehovah, but they had not known that He was also a loving Father. It was Jesus who gave that supreme idea to the world; and when this multitude of people who had followed him to the mountain heard him talk about their *Father* in heaven, their hearts swelled within them. They wondered why they had never known before that they were the beloved children of the Creator.

Jesus did not wish any of his listeners to think, because the faith he taught them was so much more loving than the religion which they had known before, that he sought to do away with Judaism. On the contrary, he said to them:

"Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.

"For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.

"Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. 'For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.'

As they looked at Jesus, standing there against the blue sky, they thought how different he was to the scribes and Pharisees. And he wanted them to be more righteous than their harsh old teachers! Well, they would attempt to be. They, too, would try to love and understand the Father in heaven. If it was his love for the

Father which made Jesus so much more beautiful than other men, they wanted also to feel that love, that they might be like him. It seemed to them that they had already entered upon a new and keener life. They drew long breaths of the pure mountain air, tingling with joy from head to feet.

Jesus went on to explain to them certain points of the old law, making them understand that the interpretation of the scribes and Pharisees was insufficient. He said:

"Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment:

"But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire."

The harsh Jews were always calling each other fools, and almost every day they were angry with somebody—with or without cause; yet they brought gifts to the altar in accordance with the law, as if by many burnt offerings they could buy their peace with God. Jesus now said to them:

"If thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee; leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift."

Surely this was a new interpretation of the law—this counsel of brotherly tolerance! And how easy it seemed at the moment, while Jesus stood there before them! As they listened to the Master's words, old Jews smiled at each other, when yesterday they would have frowned or looked askance. The whole of that great multitude was

like one being, united by one overmastering idea—the idea of brotherhood. And how happy they were! They had never before realised what true happiness was. Their eyes shone.

Jesus now explained other points in the old law, and every rule he touched upon he illuminated. Among other things, he told them:

“Ye have heard that it hath been said, an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth:

“But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also.

“And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also.

“And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain.

“Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn thou not away.”

The listeners gasped. “An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth,” had always seemed to them a just law; but now they realised how hateful it was. If all other men were their brothers, as Jesus said, and if their enemies were the children of God the same as they were, of course they must forgive each other. Gradually it dawned upon the minds of those Jews that if they could follow the advice of Jesus, “Resist not evil,” by that very passive endurance they would make evil against themselves impossible on the part of their fellowmen; that non-resistance was the most powerful of all resistance.

As Jesus paused a moment to let this new idea sink deep into the minds of his listeners, some of them gave little joyful cries of comprehension. And Jesus smiled down upon them, feeling that they were coming very near to the kingdom of heaven. And now he added:

“Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy.

“But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;

“That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.”

Again those little cries of joyful comprehension followed the words of Jesus. They had not before understood that the gifts of Nature, bestowed on good and evil men alike, were God’s way of saying that all beings were His children. Even an earthly father did not discriminate too much between an erring son and one that was obedient; and when Jesus reminded them now that God did not so discriminate, in sending his blessings of sunshine and of rain, it made God seem to be in very truth their Father. Jesus said:

“If ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? Do not even the publicans the same?

“And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? Do not even the publicans so?

“Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.”

The Jews were in the habit of giving alms to the poor, but they often gave in an ostentatious way, looking around to see if their neighbours observed how generous they were. Jesus now advised them:

“Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven.

“Therefore when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the syna-

gogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.

"But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth:

"That thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly."

Then the Master spoke to them about prayer. With the Jews prayer was a form, almost a social obligation. If a man was not known to pray, he lost caste among his neighbours. This idea of prayer was revolting to Jesus, who lived in constant communion with his Father in heaven.

"When thou prayest," he said, "thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.

"But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.

"But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking.

"Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask Him."

Then, standing there upon the mountain and looking down at the upraised, earnest faces of those men and women, the Master taught them the Lord's Prayer, which generation after generation of Christians have repeated daily for nearly two thousand years, that prayer which is the most beautiful supplication ever formed in words, including in its brief lines all that man needs to say to God in giving himself utterly to Him:

“Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.

“Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.

“Give us this day our daily bread.

“And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.

“And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.”

When, in a Christian church, we hear a great congregation repeat the Lord's Prayer as with one voice, we think of that first time when it was spoken upon the mountain, under the blue sky of Galilee, by the Master himself.

“Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.” The difference between this supplication and the old Jewish rule, “An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth,” is the difference between Christianity and Judaism. For, as Jesus said that day:

“If ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you:

“But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.”

And he told them also that when they fasted they should not be of a sad countenance, like those hypocrites who disfigure their faces, that they might appear unto men to fast; but that they should rather anoint their heads and wash their faces, that men should not know they were fasting, but that only God should know. For God, who saw in secret, would reward them openly. And Jesus said:

“Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal:

"But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal:

"For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."

"No man can serve two masters," Jesus said, "for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.

"Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?

"Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?

"Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature?

"And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin:

"And yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.

"Wherefore, if God so clothes the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?

"Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed?

"(For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.

"But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his

righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

“Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.”

This teaching was very sweet to the Galileans, for their lives were simple and their wants were few; but there were also upon the mountain that day certain men from Judæa, where Nature was less kind than in the north; and though these men were charmed with the teaching of Jesus, his advice to take no thought for the morrow seemed to them a trifle visionary—even as it seems to some in our own day whose worldly wisdom is greater than their faith.

The Jews were very severe in their judgment one of another, and many of them performed good actions not to be seen of God, but to be seen of men. Jesus said to them now:

“Judge not, that ye be not judged.

“For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.”

Here and there a man in the multitude glanced uneasily at his neighbour, suddenly conscience-smitten for having judged him unkindly. How had he dared to fancy that his neighbour’s motives were less pure than his own?

Then Jesus talked to them about their relations with God, and how they should ask the Father in heaven for blessings, with perfect faith that they would receive them. He said:

“Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you:

“For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that

seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.

“Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone?

“Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent?

“If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven, give good things to them that ask him?”

Then, having spoken of their relations with God, Jesus now spoke again of their relations with their fellowmen. And he gave them the Golden Rule, which Christians since that day have held up before themselves as the highest ideal of life:

“All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them.”

How simple and how beautiful it sounds, and yet how few there are of us who follow it!

Jesus was always fond of using figures of speech and of talking in symbols. This gave to his teachings a great charm, and made his words easy to remember.

“Enter ye in at the strait gate,” he said; “for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat:

“Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.”

Many other things Jesus taught them that day upon the mountain, so that it seemed to some of his listeners that they had learned enough to guide their ways a whole life long—yet they desired ever to hear more and more. At the end of his sermon he said:

“Whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock:

"And the rain descended, and the floods came, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock.

"And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand:

"And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it."

When Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at the doctrine he had preached. Though based upon the old Jewish faith, it was all new and wonderful to them. A God who was a loving Father! "Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors!" "Judge not, that ye be not judged!" "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you!" It seemed to the people that these sayings had power to change the world.

And they were equally astonished at the *way* of the Master's teaching, for he spoke as one having authority, and not as the scribes. The scribes repeated old sayings in a dull and lifeless way; while the words of Jesus were like flames, illuminating everything they touched.

As long as they lived, these people remembered him as he had looked that day on the mountain, standing upon a rock, tall and slender in white garments, his head outlined against the vivid blue of the Galilean sky.

CHAPTER XII

STILLING THE STORM

Jesus came down with his disciples to the lake of Gennesaret. It was late in the day, the sun was gone, the rolling waters were a deep, deep blue, dark clouds moved swiftly across the heavens, there was a chill in the air and the wind was rising.

"Let us pass over unto the other side," said Jesus to his friends, for he wanted to bring his message of a loving Father to those who dwelt on the eastern shore.

The lake of Gennesaret is six miles wide, and they found a boat for the crossing, a boat with oars and a sail. Even as they launched it, a little wave slapped over the side, wetting the hands of those who were by the rail.

"There is going to be a storm," they said. But the Master had expressed a wish to cross the lake, and no one dreamed of suggesting that they wait until the storm had passed.

And other smaller boats set out with theirs, for in the multitude that followed Jesus there were some so enthusiastic that they would have gone after him had he started out to cross the unknown sea, instead of the little lake of Gennesaret when a tempest was brewing among the hills beyond. Had they not heard him preach the Sermon on the Mount?

The boat of the Master and his twelve disciples had gone only a little way from the shore when a terrific gust of wind nearly whipped the sail from the mast; but Jesus

paid no attention to the raging of the elements. He had been preaching and healing all that day, and he was weary. He went and laid himself down in the stern of the boat, and placing his head upon a cushion which was there, he fell into a deep and untroubled sleep. His disciples gazed at him through the gathering darkness. It seemed so strange to them that he should fall asleep at such a time—like a child upon the bosom of its mother. Would he sleep like that all the way? they wondered—or would the boat be able to go all the way? It seemed impossible, if the wind and the waters continued their mad struggle.

Wave after wave washed over the side. The mast rocked and groaned, and they were obliged to lower the sail. Four of the men took to the oars, and one of them tried to bail out the water which filled the bottom; but for every bucketful which he threw over the side, two bucketfuls poured in. The rain began to fall in whirling sheets, and the force of the wind itself was like a wall of water against which the oars were powerless to make headway. At last they gave up rowing, in despair, and resigned themselves to the will of the tempest. The wind was not blowing them across the lake, neither back to the shore they had left, but southward, and they knew not where they were.

The day was quite gone, and darkness covered the waters; but now and then a vivid flash of lightning showed them the waves, which were dashing wild and high, and in those brief flashes they also saw the faces of one another. Pallid they sat, with set lips and haggard eyes. And still Jesus slept in the stern of the boat.

At last a wave greater than any that had come before washed over the edge, and even Peter cried out in terror. No, they would not wait any longer. Surely

the Master would wish to be awakened! And they cried to him:

“Master, Master, awake! Carest thou not that we perish?”

Jesus arose to his feet, standing in the water which partly filled the boat. His garments, even the cushion upon which he had lain, were soaked. But he uttered no exclamation, and to the frightened disciples it seemed as if he were still unaware of the danger which menaced them.

Then he raised his voice, and speaking to the wind and the waves he commanded them to be still. His tones were clear and ringing, yet there was in them a thrill of love, as if the tempest he rebuked were a living and wayward being which knew not the harm it wrought.

“Peace, be still!”

As he spoke a vivid flash of lightning illumined the sea, and by its light the disciples saw the face of the Master. All their lives they remembered him as he had looked at that moment. It seemed to them that they had seen the face of God Himself.

“Peace, be still!”

Was the wind veering? They no longer felt it in their faces. The waves ceased to wash over the edge of the boat, which now rode the water steadily. The shrieking of the tempest died to a gentle whisper, the rain ceased to fall. In a briefer time than they had taken to arouse the Master, the storm was stilled, and there was a great calm. So quiet it was that they could hear the tinkle of a sheep-bell on the far-away shore.

The disciples were silent and amazed. All their fear had left them, and the calm which had descended upon the lake possessed their own souls, too. Jesus went back to his place in the stern of the boat, and sat down. For

a little time he said nothing, and they knew not what to say. Then he spoke:

"Why are ye so fearful? How is it that ye have no faith?"

They could not answer him, but they said to one another:

"What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?"

Again they took up the oars, and rowed steadily toward the other shore. There was no beacon light to guide them, and the night was still dark; but now they knew that they would reach the goal—wherever it might be. Why had they been afraid? Was it indeed true, they wondered, that they were of little faith? How peacefully Jesus had slept! And had they not awakened him, and had he not stilled the storm, they felt that somehow all would have been well. For he was the Son of God, and how could he be drowned, or die in any other way, until his work on earth was finished? Though they could not see his face, yet they could feel his eyes upon them in the darkness, and they knew that the eyes were full of comprehending love. They might be fearful, they might be lacking in faith, but the Master could never despise them. They would try still harder to be worthy of his love, being certain of his sympathy and forgiveness when they failed. That is not the way of the world's incentives; but Jesus had said that his kingdom was not of this world.

In a little while even the clouds which hid the sky seemed to melt and pass away, and the stars shone out clear and tranquil above their heads. When the growing light enabled them to see the face of Jesus, it wore the look they had imagined in the darkness—soft and patient, with a great love in the eyes.

And when, after long rowing, they drew near to the

farther shore, they heard some one singing on the hills beyond. The voice came to them out of the mystery of the distance, as if some unknown soul were calling its love to the Master and to them. They never learned whose was the voice which had sung that night, on the farther shore of the lake; but often in the future, when for a moment they doubted the heart of humanity, a swift memory came to them of the tones of that unseen singer, and they remembered that out of the storm comes the calm, and out of the mystery of the distance the singing soul of the world.

CHAPTER XIII

THE LITTLE DAUGHTER OF JAIRUS

There lived in Capernaum a ruler of the synagogue named Jairus, who had a little daughter that he dearly loved. The child was twelve years old and she was beautiful, with long, curling golden locks and soft dark eyes. It seemed to the father and mother that never since the beginning of the world, had there been born a child so wonderful as theirs. Yet, though they loved her so, they had not spoiled her with unwise indulgence; for she was gentle and obedient, and seemed to have no desire save to make her parents happy all day long.

But the girl was slender and frail, and the one anxiety of the father and mother was lest some cold wind should blow upon her too roughly, or the hot sun of summer shine too fiercely upon her little head. If any harm should come to her, they told each other, they would feel that they themselves had lived too long upon the earth. There is nothing which gives so pure a happiness as love; but they who love one being too intensely live always with their door wide open to fear.

The things we greatly dread always come to us sooner or later, and the summer when the little girl was twelve years old she sickened of a fever and lay tossing and helpless on her bed. The father and mother knew not what to do; they could only gaze at each other and at their child with wide, despairing eyes. The best physicians of the city came and looked at her and went away

again, leaving remedies behind them—but no hope. And Jairus, who had already learned from Jesus about the Father in heaven, prayed all day and all night long, even promising the half of his possessions to the poor if God would spare him this one treasure. But she grew steadily worse.

“If Jesus of Nazareth were only here!” said Jairus every hour. But the Master had gone over to the other side of the lake, and no one knew just when he would return.

At last the news came to Jairus that one of his neighbours had seen Simon Peter in Capernaum. The heart of the stricken father leaped with hope, for wherever one saw Peter, it was certain that Jesus was not far away. Leaving his little daughter in the care of her weary mother, the ruler of the synagogue went out to look for the Master.

He found him in one of the streets of the city, surrounded as usual by a multitude of people. Making his way with difficulty through the crowd, Jairus threw himself at the feet of Jesus, crying:

“My little daughter lieth at the point of death: I pray thee, come and lay thy hands on her, that she may be healed; and she shall live.”

Jesus remembered the daughter of Jairus, for he loved all children, and knew by name many of the little ones of Capernaum. He turned his face at once toward the father’s house. But he could only go slowly, so great was the throng of people which crowded forward seeking to have speech with him; for when the news had come that Jesus of Nazareth had returned from the country of the Gadarenes, the whole city had flocked forth to meet him.

Now it often happens that when a man sets out to do

one good action, he does another unconsciously by the way, and it was so with Jesus that morning. In the crowd that pressed about him there was a poor woman who had been sick for twelve years with a seemingly incurable malady. She had suffered much from many physicians, and had spent all the money that she had in trying to be cured; but she had grown steadily worse instead of better, and it seemed to her now that she had but a flicker of life in her worn and wasted body.

When she learned that Jesus was in Capernaum, she had summoned all the strength that she had left, and had gone out to find him, saying to herself:

“If I may touch but his clothes, I shall be whole.”

Coming behind him in the crowd, she reached out her hands and touched the hem of his garment. In her heart there was a great faith, and as soon as she had touched him she felt in her body that the terrible disease had left her.

Jesus had not seen her; but he suddenly felt that the virtue of healing had gone out from him, and turning about in the press of people, he asked:

“Who touched my clothes?”

His disciples, who were beside him, pointed to the hundreds around, and said:

“Thou seest the multitude thronging thee, and sayest thou, Who touched me?”

But Jesus wished to know whom he had cured, for he dearly loved all those who had been healed by him. In giving them of his own strength and health he made them forever a part of himself.

And the woman, fearing and trembling, and knowing what was done in her, came forward and fell down at the feet of the Master, telling him all the truth. He said to her:

"Daughter, be of good comfort; thy faith hath made thee whole."

Then, rejoicing, she went back to her own house. And from that day forward, as long as she lived, she talked to her friends about Jesus of Nazareth, trying to give them also the great faith which had made her whole.

Jairus still stood beside Jesus, who was coming to heal his little daughter. But even as the Master had spoken to the woman, there came certain friends from the house of the ruler of the synagogue, and they said to Jairus:

"Thy daughter is dead; trouble not the Master."

With the shock of his grief the face of Jairus became pallid as death itself. He would have fallen to the ground, but Jesus quickly took him by the hand, saying:

"Be not afraid, only believe."

The hope of a great love needs but little to feed upon, and the eyes of Jairus lost their despairing look. What did the Master mean? What could he do, if the child were already dead? Silently, stumbling as he walked, the poor man followed Jesus to the little house where all his hopes lay stricken.

The master permitted no one to go with them but Peter and James and John. Had it been possible he would have performed all his cures in secret, for already the very fame he had achieved by means of them was hampering his work. In the country of the Gadarenes, because of his miracles, the frightened people had asked him to go away.

As they drew near to the home of Jairus, they heard the sound of the minstrels who had come to make sad music in the house of death. And coming nearer still, they heard the wailing of women, above the hoarser voices of men. Jesus, standing on the threshold of the

house, looked in upon the mourning company. And he said:

"Why make ye this ado, and weep? The damsel is not dead, but sleepeth."

And they laughed him to scorn, for some there are always who can deride the words of wisdom, even in the presence of death.

But Jesus made all the people go out of the house, the minstrels and the relatives and the neighbours; for he did not wish to be hampered by the disbelief of others in the work he had to do. When those who had been bewailing the maiden's death were all outside the house, Jesus closed the door softly after them; then he took Peter and James and John, and the father and mother of the child, and passed with them into the chamber where she lay. The faith of his own disciples and the love of the parents were sources of equal power.

The dead girl lay as if she were indeed asleep. It seemed impossible that anything so fragile and so fair could have suffered the great change which strong men dread. Her little hands were folded upon her breast, and some one had laid between them a white lily, of the kind which Jesus loved and had himself so often gathered when a child. Her golden curls lay over the white pillow, the long dark lashes of her closed eyes cast faint shadows upon her pallid cheeks. But what made the watchers catch their breath, was not the innocent beauty of the dead child, but the peculiar smile upon her face. It was a smile of mystery and strangeness, as if some lovely secret unknown to the wisest of the living had been revealed to her in the realm of death.

But as they looked from the face of the child to the face of Jesus, the parents and the three disciples saw on his lips the same smile. Whatever the secret was which

wrapped the dead girl in its mystery, that secret was shared by the Master. Only for a moment he stood there looking down at her and smiling, for the grief of the parents was heavy on his heart.

Then he bent and took her by the hand, and as his fingers closed over hers they closed also over the stem of the white lily, so that the Master and the child both held it. The disciples could smell its strong fragrance. In a voice low and tender, yet thrilling with intensity, Jesus said:

“Damsel, I say unto thee, arise.”

And the spirit of the child came back again to the form it had quitted but a little while before. Her dark lashes fluttered, her brown eyes opened wide, and obedient to the Master’s voice as she had always been to the voice of her mother, she arose and stood before them, still holding the white lily in her hand.

The parents were too happy to say anything. They only clasped their child with loving arms, while the tears rolled down their faces.

Jesus told them to give the damsel something to eat, and the mother hurried to obey him. The necessity of ministering to the child thus saved her from the dangerous effect of too much joy, after her hopeless grief.

And Jesus told the father and mother, and also his three friends, that they should not proclaim the miracle he had wrought. “Tell no man,” he said.

Then, leaving the family of Jairus alone with their happiness, the Master beckoned to his disciples and went back to the waiting multitude.

CHAPTER XIV

THE MESSENGERS

Now for several months the disciples had been constantly with Jesus. They had listened to his beautiful talks about the Father in heaven, the kingdom of God that was coming to the world, and the love which men should have for one another. And almost every day during those months they had seen him heal the sick and cast out devils from the insane, and do all other kinds of good works. But now the Master wanted his twelve trusted friends to do these things themselves, to preach as he had preached, and to heal the sick and afflicted. Heretofore they had received freely, now he wished them to give freely to others of all that he had bestowed on them. For Jesus knew that no man really possesses an idea, or a faith—or possibly anything else—until he has given it away.

We can easily believe that the disciples were appalled at first by the new responsibility. To stand up before strange people and preach! To lay their hands upon the sick and command them to be well! To speak with authority of the Father in heaven and His kingdom! They were simple men, these Galilean fishermen and the others, they were not even deeply learned in the letter of the Jewish scriptures; and now the Master told them to assume a position even above that of the scholarly scribes. Would men listen to them—especially in the towns where they were known?

Jesus told them that wherever they went they were to declare: "The kingdom of heaven is at hand."

And he said that they should provide nothing for themselves, save only a staff to help them along the hard roads; that they should take neither gold nor silver, nor even brass in their purses; that they should wear but one coat, and put sandals on their feet instead of shoes. For, said Jesus, in regard to their penniless mission, "the workman is worthy of his meat," and they were to ask their food of the strangers to whom they brought the message of Jesus.

He told them that whenever they came into any house, they should salute it, saying, "Peace be with you;" and that, if the house was worthy, peace would indeed come to it, but if the house was unworthy, the peace would return to themselves. And if any house or city would not receive them, they should in leaving shake the dust of it from off their feet, as a witness against those who had rejected the messengers of the Messiah.

"Behold," said Jesus, "I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves."

And he warned them that harm would sometimes come to them, that they would be arrested and brought before governors and councils; but they were not to take thought beforehand as to what they should say in their own defense, for the words would be given them in the hour when words were necessary. "It is not ye that speak," said Jesus, "but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you."

The disciples trembled at the very thought of being themselves the mouthpiece of God. It seemed an honour too great for them. And though they knew that this mission was the proof of their worthiness to be called apostles,

yet they would have postponed it. For grown men are often as timid as children when they enter upon some great work. The very strength of their desire to succeed makes them afraid.

"What I tell ye in darkness," said Jesus, "that speak ye in light: and what ye hear in the ear, that preach ye upon the housetops. . . .

"Whosoever, therefore, shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven. . . .

"He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me is not worthy of me.

"He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it."

Always when Jesus spoke to his disciples like that they felt themselves grow strong. So long as his eyes were on them they were able to do anything, but how would it be when they were far away from him? The Master tried to make them understand and feel that while they were on his mission, they were indeed *himself*, a part of him. And being a part of Jesus, they were also a part of the Father—the chosen messengers of God. He said:

"He that receiveth you receiveth me, and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me. . . .

"And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward."

Though the disciples told themselves that they were working for love of Jesus and not for any personal reward, yet this promise comforted them, as it has comforted so many devoted souls since then. There are few sayings of

Jesus better known than this one, and many a cup of cold water, as well as more substantial things, has been given to the little ones of earth in remembrance of it. For the teacher who can embody his wisdom in *sayings* which are easily remembered, has made it impossible for the world of men ever to forget him or his teachings.

Jesus sent his disciples out two by two, instead of singly, that they might strengthen and comfort each other by daily talks about the Master they had left behind. And also, when one of them stood up before strange multitudes and spoke about Jesus and the Father in heaven, there would be at least one person present who believed in him and in his message. For the Master understood the heart of man, and how it leans upon the sympathy of others.

And the disciples were successful in their preaching. Hundreds listened to them almost everywhere they went —for did they not speak of the Master? They told the wonderful story of a Godmade man. Jesus could not have spoken of himself as they spoke of him, and men who had never seen the Master from Nazareth were thrilled with a desire to know the extraordinary man who could arouse such love in the hearts of his closest friends. Every day now, in seven different places, was some one telling about the Father in heaven and His love of the world; for Jesus also continued to travel about and to preach, taking with him as companions the new converts and the women disciples, his mother, Mary Magdalene, Salome the mother of James and John, and many others.

But what thrilled each of the twelve disciples most was the first cure which he himself performed, his own first miracle of healing. They learned by trying, as all must learn, that they could lay their hands upon the sick and bring them back to health. The first time that each of them commanded disease to leave a sufferer, he was

obliged to forget himself entirely and to remember only that he was the messenger of Jesus. Had he thought of himself, he would have doubted his own power; but he could not doubt the power of Jesus. And so the cures were performed.

We must remember that, before they had met Jesus, most of these men had been humble workers with their hands, and that now, after only a few months, they had become the famous teachers of a new and living religion. If a child were suddenly to become a man as great and powerful as the conqueror Napoleon, it would not seem stranger to him than it seemed to these Galileans when, in the quiet watches of the night, they had time to think of themselves and of the change which had been wrought in them. But they could not become proud, because they always remembered that in comparison with Jesus they were as nothing, and that all the power they had they owed to him alone.

Often, when some work that we have to do in the world seems beyond our courage, we think of those devoted fishermen, Peter and Andrew, James and John, standing up before the scholarly scribes and members of the sanhedrim, and teaching them. We could none of us find anything to do so difficult as that must have been at first for the disciples, because the learned ones among the Jews were very arrogant, and disposed to wrangle even with each other about minute points of the scriptures. But it was easy to teach the common people, the ignorant ones, those who were not contented with their lives; for to them the announcement of the kingdom of heaven was the promise of a time when they might receive all that they had missed in this world. And to them also the Father in heaven seemed nearer and sweeter than He seemed to the more prosperous ones.

At last came the day when the disciples could return to Jesus. The allotted time of their mission was at an end, and from all parts of Galilee they came to the place which the Master had appointed. During every hour of their absence they had yearned to see Jesus, and now they were to see him. Would he praise them because they had done so much? Would he blame them because they had not done more? Now that their work was over, each man thought of little ways in which he might have bettered his own.

One of them remembered a poor sick woman whom he could have healed, had he not forgotten that she was waiting for him, and was too shy to call attention to herself. Another recalled the question of a Pharisee which he had answered thoughtlessly, perhaps giving a wrong impression of the teaching of Jesus. A third was troubled because he had neglected to speak at a certain place where several of the scribes were present, having been afraid of their superior smiles at his unscholarly language. Every one of them had something with which to reproach himself—for they were very humble in spirit, these messengers of the Master.

But when the twelve men sat down to sup with Jesus on the evening of their return, and told him all that they had done, he declared that their labour had been good. And he called them faithful servants of the Father.

The soft moon, which seems to shine more lovingly over Galilee than over other parts of the world, shone in through the little window of the chamber where they sat at meat, a gentle breeze came from the lake where the Master had stilled the storm, and the crickets chirped merrily in the grass outside the door. And in the hearts of the devoted messengers was the peace which passeth understanding.

CHAPTER XV

THE ANGEL OF THE POOL

Jesus sometimes went up to Jerusalem to attend the Jewish feasts, because on those occasions there were many people gathered together from all parts of the country, and he could preach to them. The great Temple at Jerusalem was the very centre of the Hebrew national life, as the great city of London is now the centre of all things English. But Jesus was never happy in Jerusalem as he was in his own Galilee. The cold and formal religion taught in the Temple repelled him. And the priests and scribes and Pharisees already disliked the young Galilean with the shining eyes, whom all the common people loved so much; but at present they only scoffed at him, and sought to throw discredit on his teaching.

They remembered a rumour which had been spread abroad some months before, when John the Baptist had declared that this young Nazarene was greater than himself, even saying that Jesus was the Messiah. The priests and scribes and Pharisees of Jerusalem had no great respect for John the Baptist—"the voice crying in the wilderness." To them he was only a visionary; yet they did not speak much against him, though he was so popular with the people, because they did not consider him dangerous to themselves. But this Jesus of Nazareth was different. He worried them.

Now at Jerusalem there was a pool, called the pool of Bethesda, and it was very famous among the Jews; for

they believed that sometimes an angel came down from heaven and troubled the waters of the pool, and that whoever first stepped into it after the angel had troubled the waters was made whole of any disease that he had. There were five porches about the pool, in which sick people waited for the sign of the angel; and when they saw the movement of the waters they hurried down, each trying to be the first to step in. Not every one who waited thus had really seen the angel; but they had seen the troubling of the waters. A few there were who claimed to have seen the heavenly visitor himself, and of course their friends believed them, because they believed in the angel.

The first Sabbath after Jesus came up to Jerusalem this time, he stood by the pool of Bethesda and gazed into the waters which were now still and untroubled. He was thinking of the work that he wished to do in the Holy City, where, though the priests and Pharisees were cold and skeptical, the common people believed in such celestial beings as the angel of this pool. John the beloved disciple was with the Master, and it was he who afterward told the world what happened there.

As Jesus raised his eyes from the waters, he saw an old man lying on a kind of mattress-bed in one of the five porches surrounding the pool. His face was wasted with disease and lined with age; but in his eyes there was a look of flaming eagerness, as he watched the unruffled surface of the waters.

Jesus questioned him, and learned that he had been sick and nearly helpless for thirty-eight years—a longer time than the Master himself had lived upon the earth.

"Wilt thou be made whole?" Jesus asked, with his radiant smile.

The unfortunate man seemed to gather a little strength even from the nearness of the Master. Raising himself

upon one thin elbow, he looked at Jesus intently, and said:

"Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool; but while I am coming, another steppeth down before me."

"*Rise,*" said Jesus, "*take up thy bed, and walk.*"

The man did not seem even surprised, so perfect was the Master's control of his will. Obediently as a child, he arose to his feet, bent down and lifted his bed upon his back, and walked—as easily as before the great infirmity had stricken him, thirty-eight years ago.

Turning to thank the stranger who had so miraculously cured him, he was surprised to see that Jesus had disappeared, swallowed up by the crowd which was passing by the place; for there were always crowds in Jerusalem at the time of the great feasts.

The healed man sang with joy, when he fully realised that he could walk. It was the happiest Sabbath day which he had ever known, and the bed upon his back seemed light as thistledown. But he had only gone a short way when he was stopped by a company of Jews, who regarded him with dark and scowling faces. He wondered what was the trouble. But the Jews did not give him time to question them: they said sternly:

"It is the Sabbath day: it is not lawful for thee to carry thy bed." The Jews had very rigid laws about the Sabbath.

"He that made me whole," answered the man, "the same said unto me, Take up thy bed, and walk."

But when the Jews demanded to know who had dared to tell him to break the Sabbath in this way, he could not enlighten them. He had no idea who was the stranger that had cured him beside the pool of Bethesda. And he wondered that these Jews should take no interest in

his cure, but only in the fact that he was carrying his bed.

Later in the day Jesus found the man whom he had healed, walking in the Temple. And he said to him:

"Behold, thou art made whole: sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon thee." For Jesus knew that the man's long infirmity had been caused by his own sins.

The Master was not yet so famous in Jerusalem as he was in Galilee, but most of the people in the crowds about the Temple knew him by sight. When the man learned the name of the stranger who had cured him by the pool of Bethesda, he told the Jews that it was Jesus of Nazareth who had said to him, "Rise, take up thy bed, and walk."

Then the Jews began to persecute Jesus, and wanted to kill him, because he had done these things on the Sabbath day. But the Master said to them:

"My Father worketh hitherto, and I work."

This answer made the Jews angrier than ever. It was bad enough, they told themselves, that this young carpenter from Nazareth should come and preach in the courts of the Temple, drawing the attention of all men to himself; it was bad enough that he broke the Sabbath and taught other men to break it; but now, by his answer to them, he had said that *God was his Father*, thus making himself equal with God. Such an idea was preposterous to the Jews. Was not God the stern *Judge* of Israel? How then could He be the Father of this amazing young man from the north?

But Jesus answered them again, and said:

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise.

"For the Father loveth the Son, and sheweth him all things that himself doeth; *and he will shew him greater works than these, that ye may marvel.*

"For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them; even so the Son quickeneth whom he will. . . .

"That all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father which hath sent him. . . .

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live. . . .

"I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me."

Then Jesus reminded his astonished listeners that John the Baptist had borne witness that he was truly the Son of God. And he said of John:

"He was a burning and a shining light: and ye were willing for a season to rejoice in his light.

"But I have greater witness than that of John: for the works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me. . . .

"Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me. . . .

"Had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me: for he wrote of me."

After these sayings, the Jews could no longer fail to understand that Jesus claimed to be the long-promised Messiah. In our day, it is almost impossible to realise how great their excitement must have been. They did not believe in him, but they saw that he believed in himself, and that he would make men follow him in greater

and greater numbers. They could not doubt the works that he had done, for hundreds had testified of them, and they had seen with their own eyes this day the cripple who had lain so long beside the pool of Bethesda, walking and carrying his bed upon his back.

No, they could not deny his works; but they could challenge his motives. There could be no doubt, they said, that he cast out devils by the aid of Beelzebub, the prince of devils. This was the same as saying that Jesus had sold himself to Satan, for the sake of worldly fame and power.

But the Master said to them:

"If Satan cast out Satan, he is divided against himself; how then shall his kingdom stand? But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you."

But the Jews of Jerusalem did not want the kingdom of God, and they did not want Jesus. So, as the time had not yet come when he felt that his Father in heaven commanded him to preach the new doctrine of love in the very stronghold of Judaism, the great Temple, he left the arid region of Jerusalem and went back to his own beloved Galilee, where the birds sang in the trees, and the brooks rippled over the stones, and the hearts of men were simple and full of faith; where there was time for dreams, and heaven seemed near to earth; and where he and his friends could live in daily communion with such celestial beings as the angel which was wont at certain seasons only to trouble the waters of the pool of Bethesda.

CHAPTER XVI

JOHN THE BAPTIST

You remember the voice which had cried in the wilderness of Judæa, “Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” You remember the tall, gaunt man, with black matted hair hanging upon his shoulders, who was clothed in a single garment of camel’s hair, girt about the waist with a leather strap—the man who had first declared that Jesus was the Messiah. You remember how John the Baptist had seen the Spirit of God descend in the form of a dove and alight upon the head of Jesus, as he came up out of the river after his baptism, and how the voice of God had said: “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”

Now after John had said to his former disciples, Andrew and another, “Behold the Lamb of God!” when Jesus had passed by, and after these disciples had left John and followed Jesus, the gaunt Baptist went on preaching as before, and saying: “Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” Only now he said it with even greater fervour, for he had seen the vision of the dove, and had heard the voice of God proclaiming Jesus, and he knew that he who should bring the kingdom of heaven had already begun his work among men.

He preached so fervently against the many evil things he saw about him, and especially against the abuses of the rich and powerful, that Herod the Tetrarch caused him to be arrested and cast into prison. He was shut up

in a fortress, in a place where Herod also had a palace, so that the gorgeous halls where the Tetrarch and his queen Herodias lived with their dissolute friends, and the cold dungeon where the prophet from the desert pined in solitude, were practically under one roof.

Herodias, the wife of the Tetrarch, was not a good woman. She was the sister-in-law of her own husband, whom she had married for ambition, because she wanted to be a queen. This whole family of Herods had long been disliked by the Jews. They were cruel and profligate, and many of their actions outraged the stern Hebrew sense of propriety. Especially were the Jews incensed by this marriage between the Tetrarch and his brother's wife; and Herod had divorced a former wife without just cause in order to marry his sister-in-law.

Herodias had a young daughter, Salome, a beautiful but unwholesome creature about sixteen or seventeen years of age, who had inherited all the bad qualities of her mother. Salome was not the daughter of the Tetrarch, but of Philip, the former husband of the Queen; and, young as she was, the Jews distrusted her. But Salome could be very charming when she chose, which was always when she had some object to gain, either for herself or for her mother. For Herodias had taught the girl obedience—which was perhaps her only virtue.

Of course John the Baptist knew the whole history of this strange family, with their unlawful intermarriages, for the first husband of Herodias had been her uncle; and it was as much because of John's public condemnation of the Queen and her actions, as because of his general preaching against the wickedness of those in power, that Herod had cast him into prison.

Often, by day and by night, when the revellers in the palace were silent for a moment, and the music of the

lutes and viols ceased, or only whispered softly, the Tetrarch and Herodias and Salome, and the officers and courtiers and women in the palace, could hear the loud, stern voice of the prophet John, calling from his dungeon, "Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

Now Herod himself, though he had done many evil actions, was at heart rather weak than wicked. There was somewhere deep in him a fibre which responded to the spirit of John; though what might have been religion in a stronger man, in the Tetrarch was hardly more than superstition. He had at this time no intention of killing the Baptist; he kept John shut up in the fortress so that he should not cause disturbances among the people, and especially that he should not say true things about the Queen, Herodias, who had still a strong influence over her weak husband.

Sometimes, when Herod was in a mood more serious than usual, or when the gayeties of the court had wearied him, he would send for John to be brought up from his dungeon into the palace. And on these occasions the Tetrarch would talk with the prophet, questioning him about this kingdom of heaven which he said was near at hand. "The kingdom of heaven." The very words had a strange fascination for the dissolute ruler. He had some knowledge of the kingdoms of this world, but what could this other kingdom really mean? The thought of it troubled his sleep. He had strange dreams, in which heaven and earth, angelic beings and the Queen Herodias, and also the beautiful daughter of the Queen, Salome, were strangely blent. And after one of these dreams he always sent for the Baptist and questioned him still further about his prophesies.

Was it really true, the Tetrarch wondered, that this gaunt man, robed in his garment of camel's hair, was

the great prophet Elias, risen from the dead? Herod knew that his worldly friends would laugh at him for giving so much thought to the words of John, and sometimes he laughed at himself. It was easy to make light of it all in the day time, when the sun shone; but in the night, when he could not sleep, and tossed restlessly on his carven couch, the thought of that flaming-eyed prophet in the fortress would return to him. And sometimes, in the darkest hour before the dawn, he would hear the voice of John, crying from his dungeon:

“Repent ye! Repent ye!”

And the Tetrarch would turn over again on his downy bed, vainly trying to sleep.

Sometimes the Queen Herodias would enter his room, bearing a lamp in her hand, her long black hair streaming over her shoulders, her face pale with anger. And she would say to him:

“Why do you not kill that man? His ravings madden me!”

Then she would remind Herod of the hard things which John had said against herself, making it seem—for she was wily—that her husband’s lenient ways with the prophet were an insult to herself.

But Herod always made excuses. What had John really done that was deserving of death? If he should kill him, he would make himself even more unpopular with the people. Herodias was too sensitive to criticism against herself. Would she not be patient for a little while? Perhaps something could be arranged.

And the Queen would go away, down the corridor to her own room, the lamp in her hand casting the long shadow of her figure against the crimson walls. And she would mutter to herself, “How weak this Tetrarch is!” Somehow she would find the way to rid herself of John.

Then she would think of her beautiful young daughter Salome, and wonder if the girl could not help her mother in this difficulty. What was the use of having children, she thought, if they could not be made to serve the interests of their parents?

As time went on, the Tetrarch became even more indulgent to his famous prisoner, even permitting John's disciples to visit him in the fortress. And one day the Baptist, discouraged by his long imprisonment, and more than ever desirous that the kingdom of heaven should come to earth, asked his disciples what Jesus of Nazareth was doing, and why he delayed so long in his mission of transforming the world.

The disciples told John that Jesus was still going about from place to place, preaching; but that, instead of living a life of severity and abstinence and fasting, as the Baptist had done so long, the Nazarene ate and drank like other men, and went to marriage feasts, and that there was joy among his disciples instead of sternness and sorrow.

This news troubled John. He knew that Jesus had had his sojourn in the wilderness; but had he afterward gone back to the world of pleasures? John did not understand. He could not really doubt Jesus, on whose head he had seen the dove of the Spirit of God, and yet—he was anxious. "Eating and drinking, and going to marriage feasts!" To the dweller in the wilderness, who had eaten locusts and wild honey and slept with his head upon a rock, it seemed incredible. For to John, great as he was, had not been given the sweet and loving *human* quality which made Jesus rejoice in the innocent joy of others. The mission of the Baptist had been to warn the world, while the mission of the Nazarene was to make the world of men *love* God and one another.

From his prison in the fortress of Herod, John sent two of his disciples to Jesus, to ask of him:

"Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?"

And the messengers of the Baptist, themselves troubled by the trouble of their teacher, went to Capernaum to seek out Jesus and to ask him the great question.

They found the Master surrounded by those who loved him, among whom were many women. And the two disciples of John delivered their message:

"John Baptist hath sent us unto thee, saying, Art thou he that should come, or look we for another?"

The query, coming from John, must have surprised Jesus; but he had the loving heart which could understand all things. As the most convincing answer which he could send to John would be the testimony of these two witnesses as to his works, in that same hour he cured many sick persons of their infirmities and plagues, and cast the evil spirits out of those who were insane, and to many that were blind he restored the sight which they had lost. And the disciples of John were astonished when they saw the wonders which Jesus could perform.

The Master said to them:

"Go your way, and tell John what things ye have seen and heard; how that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, to the poor the gospel is preached. And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me."

The messengers of John went back to their teacher, convinced that Jesus was indeed the one they sought, and that there was no need for them to look for another.

When they were gone, the Master began to speak to the people about John. His heart was full of a great love for the friend who had helped him in the beginning

of his work, and he said to the multitude concerning the Baptist:

“What went ye out into the wilderness for to see?
A reed shaken with the wind?

“But what went ye out for to see? A man clothed in soft raiment? Behold, they which are gorgeously apparelled, and live delicately, are in kings’ courts.

“And what went ye out for to see? A prophet? Yea, I say unto you, and much more than a prophet.

“This is he, of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee.

“For I say unto you, Among those that are born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist: but he that is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he.”

The Bible does not tell us whether John in his dungeon ever knew of the beautiful words which Jesus had spoken about him; but rumour travels fast in the Orient, and we hope that the heart of the imprisoned man was comforted by the knowledge that the Master had never doubted *him*—even for a moment. The time was soon to come when John would need all the solace which the love of Jesus could give him. For he who is in the power of a weak and vacillating king, has to fear even the worst and the youngest of that king’s associates.

Herodias, the Queen, was plotting against the life of John. She was a woman of strong will and of great vanity, and the words of the Baptist in regard to her marriage with her brother-in-law Herod still rankled in her mind. She knew that the people believed John to be the prophet Elias risen from the dead; but that meant nothing to Herodias. Elias himself would have meant nothing to her, had she met him walking in the gardens

of the palace. To Herodias the dead were dead, whether they were prophets or slaves, and she wished that John were among them. The opportunity to revenge herself came sooner than she had dared to hope.

It was the birthday of Herod. The King had made a great supper to his lords, his high captains, and the rich men of Galilee. Wine flowed abundantly, and the best musicians of the kingdom played sweet music for the entertainment of the Tetrarch and his guests. Yet Herod was not happy. He had had unpleasant dreams the night before. Even the wine he had drunken could not chase the memory of them from his mind. He thought of that old King Belshazzar in the Bible, who, after a great feast similar to this one, had seen the supernatural handwriting on the wall, "Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin."—"God hath numbered thy kingdom, and finished it. Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting." Though the loud talk and the laughter round the table made it impossible to hear what any one was saying, yet Herod could hear in imagination the voice of John from his distant dungeon, "Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." He began to wish that he had not imprisoned the Baptist. He began to wish that he were a better man—even that he had not married Herodias, thus bringing down upon himself the anathemas of the Jews.

Now whenever Herodias saw that her husband was sad, she always wondered if he were regretting that he had married her. Not that she loved him so much—but she loved to be a queen. And this evening, when the guests had left the banquet-hall and were all assembled in the great throne-room of the palace, Herodias called her young daughter Salome, and said to her:

"The King is sad. Dance for him now, that he may

be pleased with you, and thus with me, and may perhaps give me the thing which I most desire."

And Salome, who was always wonderfully dressed, and especially so on festive occasions such as this, came into the throne-room where the King sat with his friends. All eyes were fixed upon her, for she was very beautiful. Her dark hair was bound with ropes of pearls, her slender form was swathed in spangled draperies of soft rose-colour, on her little feet were jewelled shoes, and her face was like a newly opened flower.

When the King learned from Herodias that Salome would dance for him, he was glad. Though his heart was so melancholy, his eyes were hungry for beauty—the beauty of motion, of light and colour. He had never seen Salome dance, for her mother only brought her to Herod when she had something to gain by it. The musicians were commanded to play.

Gliding lightly across the marble floor, the girl began to dance before the King. At first she moved slowly, languorously, as if just awakened from sleep, her soft arms waving above her head, her lithe form swaying rhythmically to the music. She seemed to dream, and those who watched her were also in a dream, an enchanted reverie—for there was enchantment in Salome, the young daughter of the Queen.

Then gradually, almost imperceptibly, the music changed. It was faster. The dreams vanished from the eyes of Salome, and from the minds of those who watched her. She seemed to awake, to grow alert, to become intensely interested in something which the others could not see, but which they felt with her—so close was the bond of sympathy between her and them. The men sat forward in their chairs, watching. Now she stamped her little jewelled feet upon the tessellated floor; then she

seemed to rise in the air like a bird, her fluttering arms were like white wings, and the music of the lute-players seemed to be the voice of her own soul, as her form rose and fell and swayed with the melody.

The lords and captains who watched her held their breath, while the King forgot his sadness in the joy of the dance. He no longer thought of that old king, Belshazzar, and the terrible handwriting on the wall; he thought only of the vision of beauty before him, which seemed not to be of the earth, but of some mid-region between the world and the sky—for no one would think of Salome as having come from heaven.

At last, with a wild throbbing of the lutes, the little dancer began to whirl round and round upon her toes; faster and faster she flew, until those who watched her were dizzy with the motion. She seemed to be a mad thing of fire and glinting sparks of light—her rosy draperies and her jewels being blended in one mass of moving colour, whose beauty made the hearts of all to thrill. Then, with a startled cry, she flew toward the King's great chair of state, and with a charming little motion like that of a tired and capricious child, she threw herself at the feet of Herod and hid her face in her rosy veil.

Herodias had watched the face of the King. She had seen it change from a mask of weariness to an illuminated human countenance; and now, when Salome threw herself at his feet with that pretty gesture of modest maidenhood, the expression of Herod's face became tender, solicitous for the happiness of the girl, almost a child, who had danced so wonderfully to please him. He bent and raised her to her feet, and then he said:

"Salome, thou hast given me great pleasure, and these my friends are charmed with thee. The sadness

that was in my heart thou hast chased away, as the rising sun disperses the shadows of the night."

Herodias the Queen nodded her head with satisfaction, and listened for the King's next words. They more than met her expectation, for he said:

"Salome, ask of me whatsoever thou wilt, and I will give it thee."

The maiden stood in silence for a moment, as if considering what surpassing gift she might demand of this all-powerful man, who was the husband of her mother.

Seeing her hesitation, the King pledged himself anew, calling upon all his friends to witness his oath, that he would give her whatsoever she desired, *even to the half of his kingdom.*

Then Salome ran to her mother, and whispered to her: "What shall I ask?"

The face of Herodias was not beautiful to look upon at that moment, though she was noted for her beauty. The hardness of her heart was written on her countenance, as she said in a low tone to her daughter:

"Ask for the head of John the Baptist."

The King had not heard either the question or the answer. As he watched the pretty creature talking with her mother, he supposed that she was asking the advice of Herodias as to what jewelled bauble would best become her wild, dark beauty. He told himself that he would even give her the great jewelled breastplate of the high priest, should she demand it. But he was not prepared for what she did demand.

Coming again before the throne of Herod, but standing erect now instead of kneeling, Salome said, in clear and thrilling tones:

"I will that you give me, on a large tray, the head of John the Baptist."

The face of the King became suddenly scarlet, then deadly pale. He shrank back in his carven chair of state, more startled than he would have been had the young creature clenched her little fist and struck him in the face. When the first shock of her words had passed, and he realised their meaning, he asked himself if she had suddenly gone mad. Then he remembered the brief whispered conversation between Salome and her mother, and he understood. One terrible glance he cast at his implacable queen, then he looked away from her. She had become horrible to him.

He pleaded with Salome. What could she, a girl, want of this bloody gift? She was young and fair, and needed jewels to make her still fairer in the eyes of men. He would give her diamonds beyond price, and great rubies and emeralds. She should have, if she did not care for precious stones, a little palace, all her own, with slaves to wait upon her. She should have—yes, what should she *not* have, if she would relinquish this one thing?

But Salome did not weaken in her purpose, which was the purpose of her mother. As she stood there before the King, so slender and erect, she looked like Herodias; and the young lords, who a little while before had all desired to marry her, no longer dreamed of marriage or of love. They thought, instead, of blood and horror, of cruelty and death, and of all unmentionable things. And the strange young girl repeated, in a tone more thrilling than before:

“I will that you give me, on a large tray, the head of John the Baptist.”

Poor Herod! He had called his lords and captains to witness his oath that he would give this dancing princess whatsoever she desired, and he could not break his word.

But he seemed suddenly to have become an old man, so white and seamed with sorrow was his face. For he had grown to respect—yes, almost to love the stern prisoner in his dungeon, until what at first had seemed a threat had lately come to seem a promise—“The kingdom of heaven is at hand.”

The King sent for his executioner, for he *was* a king, with all his weakness, and he could rise to a terrible occasion with all the fortitude of the line of Herods which he represented. And he gave orders that John the Baptist should be beheaded, and the bleeding head given to this unmaidenly maiden, as she demanded, on a large tray.

Then, staggering like a wounded man, the King arose from his chair and left the hall of state, without casting behind him even one glance at the face of his triumphant queen.

Down in his dungeon the doomed prophet was standing alone, praying, when the executioner appeared. Perhaps the sentence of death was not unwelcome to John. He knew now that the one whose coming he had heralded was indeed the Messiah, who should transform the world. His own mission on earth was ended, and John did not love the earth. He only loved God. And as he looked in the eyes of the executioner, and saw the torchlight glitter on the sharp edge of his axe, he knew that now indeed, for him, the kingdom of heaven was very near at hand.

CHAPTER XVII

A DAY OF MIRACLES

When the disciples of John the Baptist came and told Jesus that their teacher was dead, the Master was very sad. He had loved John, as well as honoured him; and now that the stern prophet was no longer among the living, the earth seemed lonelier and sadder to Jesus. The spiritual giants among men are few, and John had been one of them.

In this hour of his grief it seemed impossible for Jesus to teach the multitude and to comfort them. He himself needed comfort. So he said to his disciples:

“Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest awhile.”

The Master went with his disciples into a boat; but the multitude, seeing him go away, ran after him along the shore. From many cities and villages they had come, so that when Jesus would have been alone to think of his dead friend and to pray, he found himself surrounded by several thousand people, each of whom wanted something for himself, the solace of a word or a touch from the Master, or the healing of infirmities. The heart of Jesus was so sad that he was moved with sympathy for all these men and women who had left their homes and followed him on foot. If he could not himself find consolation, he could at least bestow it on others. The people seemed to him like sheep without a shepherd, roaming the pastures of the world, seeking what they knew not.

And he taught them—forgetting his own sadness, as one always does in trying to help others. All day he talked to them about God, and how they should live their lives with love for one another, telling them little parables or stories to illustrate the meaning of what he said. For Jesus understood the hearts of men, and he knew that no one is ever so old or so weary that he cannot forget himself in listening to a story.

But when the evening came on, the disciples of Jesus began to be puzzled in their minds as to how all these people should be fed; for they had been following the Master for three days, and they were now in a desert place far from any village. While they were considering the question, and trying to forget their own hunger, Jesus said to the disciple Philip:

“Whence shall we buy bread that these may eat?”

Philip answered him:

“Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may take a little.”

Andrew, Peter’s brother, said to the Master:

“There is a lad here, which hath five barley loaves, and two small fishes: but what are they among so many?”

The little boy came and stood before Jesus, holding out the basket in which were the fishes and the loaves. His face was eager. He had been listening to the words of the Master, and the stories had pleased him. But he wanted to sell the provisions he had brought, for he was very poor.

Jesus turned to his disciples and told them to buy the five barley loaves and the fishes from the little boy, and then to make all the people, men, women, and children, sit down. Even John wondered what the Master was going to do; but he obeyed him without question, mingling

with the crowd and telling every one to sit down upon the grass, which grew there in such abundance that the whole shore seemed to be covered with a soft green carpet.

When they were all seated upon the ground, Jesus took the five barley loaves and the two fishes, and he blessed the food, giving thanks to God that out of His great abundance He had given them this plentiful repast there in the wilderness. Then Jesus began to break the loaves and to divide the fishes, handing the food to his disciples and telling them to distribute it among the people. So simply and so naturally he did this, so much as a matter of course, that at first neither the disciples nor the multitude realised what a marvel was taking place before their eyes; for the whole five thousand, men, women, and children, were eating heartily, as much as they desired, both of the fishes and of the bread.

When the hunger of every one was satisfied, and the disciples themselves had eaten, the Master said to them:

“Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost.”

They gathered the fragments together, and filled twelve baskets with what was left of the five barley loaves, after all the five thousand had eaten their fill—a thousand mouths to each loaf of bread. And the men who had seen this miracle which Jesus did were amazed, and they said one to another:

“This is of a truth that prophet which should come into the world!”

So excited were they that they would have taken him by force then and there and made him their king; for even yet they did not understand that the kingdom of Jesus was a purely spiritual one, above and beyond the kingdoms of this world. To them power was power, and he who could abundantly feed five thousand men, women,

and children from five loaves of bread and two small fishes, could, they reasoned, do more for them than could Herod, who cared principally to feed himself at their expense. "King of the Jews," they now called Jesus, who had only sought to show them the narrow path which led to the kingdom of heaven.

When the Master heard the acclaiming cries of the people, he desired more than ever to go away into some quiet place where he could be alone and pray; and he told his disciples to get into their boat and go before him to the other side of the lake, while he sent the multitude away.

Then Jesus went up into a mountain. At last he was alone with his Father. He prayed and talked with God until he seemed himself to be in heaven, far away from all the troubles of the earth. He heard the singing of the angels, his body seemed to melt and become one with the elements—as light as air, as fluid as water. Had he chosen, in that hour he could have ascended into heaven, leaving the world behind. So light his body was, that the wind which blew violently across the lake could have lifted it like a feather. In coming so close to God in prayer and love, all the grosser elements of his form had become spiritualised. He was like the angels.

Down on the lake below his disciples laboured with the oars. The night was dark. The wind blew with greater and greater force, and in a direction contrary to where they wished to go. Their boat was tossed by the waves; but they would not put back to the shore, because the Master had told them to cross to the other side and there await him. Remembering the time when Jesus had stilled the storm on this same lake, they no longer thought of disobeying him.

In the fourth watch of the night, looking across the dark water, they saw the form of their Master coming toward them, walking upon the waves. He seemed to be made of light, and they cried out in terror:

"It is a spirit!"

They huddled together in the boat, clutching one another's arms, and staring at that strange figure out there on the water, which moved toward them as if indeed it were a spirit and not a man. Then they heard the voice of Jesus, speaking to them across the waves, and he said:

"Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid."

When they heard the familiar voice of the Master, all their fear left them. And Peter, remembering the miracle which he had seen in the afternoon, felt himself uplifted on the wings of a great faith. He cried to Jesus:

"Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water."

"Come," said Jesus, holding out his loving arms to the disciple.

Still thrilling with his great faith, Peter stepped over the edge of the boat and onto the surface of the lake as if it had been a floor, and he also began to *walk over the water toward his Master*. So long as his eyes were fixed upon the shining form of Jesus, all was well with him; but glancing down, he saw the boisterous waves which were lashed by the wind, he grew dizzy, and a sudden fear filled his heart. At that moment Peter began to sink in the water, and he cried out:

"Lord, save me, save me!"

Jesus was instantly at his side. Putting out a loving arm, he caught the trembling form of the disciple. Still standing upon the water and holding Peter, the Master said:

"O thou of little faith! Wherefore didst thou doubt?"

Then Jesus, with Peter, stepped over the edge of the boat and joined the other disciples, who had looked on at this still greater miracle with wide and wondering eyes.

Now that Peter was safe once more upon the solid planks of the boat, he realised that if he had not been afraid—if he had not let go of the great faith which had exalted him for a moment, and had seemed to lift his body on broad wings of power, he might have walked upon the water as far as he wished to go, even as Jesus had. Peter felt that he had failed; but the eyes of Jesus shone with thankfulness that his beloved friend had even dared to go a little way toward him across the tossing waves. For he who has the courage to attempt the seemingly impossible, may some day, with a still greater faith, accomplish it.

Now that Jesus was with them in the boat, the wind ceased to blow, and without further trouble they rowed across to the other side of the lake. It seemed to the disciples that Nature herself was the slave of Jesus, and aided him in whatever he wished to do. And they knew it was because their Master had conquered his *own* nature and had made it the servant of the spirit within, which was one with the Spirit of God.

The next day the multitude which had been fed by Jesus in the desert place followed him again to the other side of the lake. They had seen the twelve men set out in their boat alone, and there had been no other boat there; but as Jesus was not now upon the mountain where he had gone to pray, nor yet upon the shore, they had themselves gone over to the other side, thinking that he must be there. They did not know that the Master could walk upon the water; and when they saw him, they said:

“Rabbi, when camest thou hither?”

Jesus answered them and said:

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled."

For Jesus knew that they had wanted to make him a king, in Herod's place, because he had *fed* them. And he said:

"Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed."

Then, still remembering the miracle of the loaves, they asked Jesus:

"What shall we do, that we might work the works of God?"

Even yet they did not understand that the miracle of the loaves and fishes was of far less value than the miracle of love which stood in man's form before them—Jesus himself. And the Master answered:

"This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent."

Seeing that Jesus did not wish them to believe in him because of the miracle by which they had been fed, but for some other and deeper reason which they did not comprehend, they now asked him:

"What sign shewest thou then, that we may see, and believe thee? What dost thou work? Our fathers did eat manna in the desert; as it is written, He gave them bread from heaven to eat."

But Jesus shook his head, saying:

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven; but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world."

Then they understood—some of them—that the true heavenly food was neither loaves nor manna, but the love of Jesus and of God. And they said, their eyes shining:

“Lord, evermore give us this bread.”

Jesus, holding out his hands to them as if he wished to give himself utterly to every one of them forever, said:

“I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.”

And they felt—those among them who understood—that they would never hunger or thirst again for anything except the true bread of heaven, which was the love of this beautiful being who stood there before them with his arms extended, as if he gave himself utterly to them. And they were very happy.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE SHINING FORM

A few days after the disciples had seen Jesus walking upon the water, he asked them:

“Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?”

Now the disciples, when absent from their Master, had heard many discussions in regard to him. In that far time, even as now, it was hard for most men to believe that a person whom they had themselves known could be altogether great—as great as those personages long dead whose names were recorded in history. Nevertheless, on account of the miracles of Jesus, there were many who were ready to admit that he must be different to others. And when Jesus asked his friends what men said about him, they replied:

“Some say that thou art John the Baptist, risen from the dead; some say that thou art the prophet Elias; some say thou art Jeremiah, or one of the other prophets.”

In those days it was believed that men sometimes lived upon the earth more than once, coming back from the dead in a new body when they had some special work to do which had been left unfinished in their former life. Of course those persons who believed that Jesus was John the Baptist were new acquaintances, who had not known him during the life of John.

Jesus now asked his disciples:

“But whom say *ye* that I am?”

"Thou art the Christ," answered Peter, "the Son of the living God."

Jesus then told Peter that he was blessed among men; that flesh and blood had not revealed this truth to him, but the Father which was in heaven. Now the name of Peter means "a stone," and Jesus, who was always fond of playing upon the inner meaning of words, said to this brave disciple who had had the courage to walk toward him across the waters of the lake:

"Thou art Peter, and upon this *rock* I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."

Peter did not realise at that time the full importance of what the Master said; but he felt that Jesus was promising him some great thing in the future. "The keys of the kingdom of heaven!" Did that mean that he would lead men to God? The disciple hoped so. "Upon this rock (Peter) I will build my church." He knew that it was because he had recognised Jesus as the Son of God, because he had *understood* that the Master could build the church of the future upon him as a foundation. This idea was ever uppermost in his thoughts—that Jesus was one with God; and the reason why he could love the Father so much was because Jesus was His son.

Had Jesus told Peter that for hundreds of years, all over the world, painters then unborn would represent him on innumerable canvasses, holding the keys of heaven in his hand, it would have seemed incredible to the good disciple; for he sought only the kingdom of heaven, and did not dream of earthly glory—which always comes in largest measure to those who labour for something else.

They were all surprised at the next words of the Master; for he told them that they should not tell any man that he was the Christ. They wondered why. And we also wonder, a little. Did he charge them to tell nobody, knowing that men meditate more profoundly upon some secret thing than upon something which they can tell to every one? Perhaps. The very idea of secrecy has a powerful fascination. Even children have their little innocent secrets which they whisper to one another, and if by chance an older person overhears them, the secret loses all its charm, and they forthwith choose another. It is because Jesus understood the child-heart which hides in all grown men and women, that he has made the whole world love him.

The disciples were now thinking intently upon Jesus as the Christ, and of course they had read the prophesies which foretold the manner of death which the Christ—when he should come—must die. So Jesus began to show to those friends that he must go into Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day. For had not the prophets declared that the Christ must suffer all these things?

The idea was shocking to Peter. He could not imagine Jesus dying at all, especially a death of pain. The eyes of the disciple were like wells of fire, so excited was he; and he took hold of the Master, as if he would forcibly keep him from such things, saying:

“Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee.”

But Jesus turned and rebuked Peter, telling him that what he said savoured not of the things of God, but of the things of men. For those who desire to follow the will of God do not shrink from pain to themselves, if

their pain is necessary and a part of the great plan of God; while ordinary men, who follow only their own desires, would disarrange the whole universe to save themselves a little suffering. And Jesus said to his disciples:

“If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.

“For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it.

“For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?

“For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works.”

The Master now wished his disciples to think of him always as the Christ who had come into the world to save men; and a few days afterward he revealed himself to three of them in a new and wonderful light. He took Peter and James and John with him onto a high mountain, apart from the others and from the multitude. They were utterly alone, Jesus and the three friends who understood him best.

The air on the mountain was clear and pure. The day was very still, hardly a leaf stirred on the trees, and it seemed to the three disciples that they had left the world behind and were with the Master in some heavenly region, unknown to men. When they heard a little bird singing afar off, they wondered if it was the voice of an angel. It might have been, for they were in a very exalted state, and men sometimes hear the voices of angels.

The Master went away from them a little distance and

stood praying, with his eyes upraised to heaven. As he prayed, a great change came over him; his face was shining like the sun, and his garments were white and glittering like the light when it falls upon snow. The disciples rubbed their eyes, thinking that something was the matter with their sight; but when they looked again, Jesus was still standing there, his face radiant as the sun, his garments glittering. And they now understood, as they had never understood before, what it really meant to be the Christ.

As they watched him, holding their breath, two other forms appeared beside the Master, talking with him. There was no one to tell Peter and James and John; yet they knew that the two who stood with the shining Jesus were Moses and Elias, the great Jewish prophets who had been dead for thousands of years. The disciples could hear their voices, which seemed to come from a long distance, though the forms were very near. They could not understand all that was said between the three radiant ones; but they knew it was about the work which Jesus had yet to do in the world, and that a part of that work was to be his death in Jerusalem.

The three disciples seemed to be in a dream, as if their bodies were locked in slumber, and it was their spirits which stood here on the top of this mountain and beheld such things as they had never thought of beholding. But, after a while they knew that they were really wide awake, and they still saw the forms of the two prophets in communion with Jesus.

And then—Moses and Elias were no longer there, but Jesus only. The world was utterly still. The little bird no longer sang in the distance; the very leaves upon the trees hung motionless, as if waiting for something yet to happen.

And Peter, who was beside himself with wonder and hardly knew what he did, said to Jesus:

"Lord, it is good for us to be here: if thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias."

A tabernacle was the movable tent of worship which the Jews had carried with them in the wilderness; it was considered very holy, and the building of a tabernacle was in itself an act of devotion. That was why it occurred to Peter to build tabernacles at this place, this mountain of transfiguration, where they had been privileged to see the glory of their Master and of the two great prophets.

But even as Peter spoke, a bright cloud came down from heaven, covering the top of the mountain where they were, and the disciples were frightened as they felt themselves in the midst of the cloud. And then they heard a voice out of the cloud, which said:

"This is my beloved Son: hear him."

The three men were so terrified that they fell upon their faces on the ground; for though they loved God, and thought of Him as their Father because He was the Father of Jesus, yet to hear Him speak thus out of a bright cloud in which they were themselves enveloped, gave them a feeling of mystery and awfulness that took away all their strength.

But Jesus came and touched them, and said:

"Arise, and be not afraid."

At the sound of that gentle voice all fear left the three disciples, and they raised their faces to the Master who was now standing alone before them, looking as he always looked, save that there was still a little of the heavenly glory around his head and form.

Peter no longer thought of building tabernacles; they were themselves tabernacles for the love and worship of

Jesus; and even Moses and Elias, as they now realised, were beings of an order far below his.

As they came down again from the mountain of transfiguration to the level plain below, where the nine other disciples awaited them, Jesus said to Peter and James and John that they should not tell any one of the vision they had had, until the Son of man should be risen again from the dead.

But the three disciples treasured the memory of it in their hearts. And often, in the silence of the night, when they were just on the edge of dreamland, they would see against the darkness of their closed eyelids that shining form of Jesus, as they had seen it on the mountain. And whenever the vision thus came to them, a great peace filled their hearts; for they knew that their beloved Master, who was so pure and high and near to God, loved them with a perfect love, and that he had chosen them out of all the world of men to be near him and to minister to him. Is it any wonder they could not realise that he was going to die?

CHAPTER XIX

THE WOMEN FRIENDS OF JESUS

Jesus was always happy in the houses of his friends; and in the little town of Bethany, on the hill beyond Jerusalem, was a home that he dearly loved to visit. There dwelt Martha and Mary, two sisters, who with their brother Lazarus believed in the kingdom of heaven. Whenever Jesus came to Jerusalem he sought this house, as a haven of peace beyond the turmoil of the city of cold priests and wrangling Pharisees.

Here his disciples came also, and were welcomed. No matter how great was the crowd that followed Jesus, in the home of Martha there was always a cup of milk or a bit of bread at least for those who were hungry; because the elder sister in this household was one of those good women who give to the world the service of their hands. She was always busy, moving about the house from morning until night, preparing food and clearing away the disorder which others had made. So willing was her service, that her family and friends had come to take it as a matter of course, and they were sometimes thoughtless, giving Martha unnecessary labour.

Jesus had come up to Jerusalem for one of the great feasts and had found shelter in the house at Bethany. There was always a turmoil in the Holy City at the time of the feasts, because the crowd was very great, and often a score of persons would be lodged in a single room, liv-

ing, as one writer says, "in that huddled state in which Orientals delight." But in the house at Bethany there was peace and quiet, even if there was not solitude; and when Jesus wanted solitude he sought the mountain-tops.

The women who followed the Master, Mary his mother, Salome the mother of James and John, Joanna the wife of one of Herod's stewards, Mary Magdalene, and the others, were always glad when Jesus went to Bethany. For they were made welcome in the house of Martha and Mary, to whom all the other women who loved Jesus were as sisters.

And they were never jealous, one of another; for the love they gave to the Master was like the love one gives to God, which is always sweetest when shared with many. It was because Jesus never seemed to think of himself, that his friends could love him so unselfishly. To him the childlike innocence of their affection was a foretaste of the kingdom of heaven, where all would be as the angels.

As Jesus seemed to dwell always in a sphere of purity above the selfish troubles of the earth, those who loved him tried to live also in the same sphere, where the things of the world did not matter, but only the things of the spirit—love, charity, kindness, mutual service, and peaceful communion. Jesus, in preaching the kingdom of heaven, carried it with him wherever he went. It seemed to his friends that they had only to listen intently at any time to hear the voices of the angels—whenever he was near them.

There was one of the women disciples for whom this simple life was peculiarly sweet, and that was Mary Magdalene. She had been a beautiful woman full of errors before she found the Master. It was said that he

had cast out of her the seven devils of as many sins, and we can believe that she had been very unhappy; for those who sin much are never really happy, however gay they may appear to be.

One day, in the midst of her life of false excitement, Mary had seen Jesus, and from that moment everything was changed for her. Perhaps she was already a little weary of her thoughtless companions, who cared for nothing but their own amusement. When she first looked into the pure and quiet eyes of Jesus, everything she had known became suddenly horrible to her.

How peaceful he was! What happiness was in the smile which he gave to his companions, who followed his every movement with eyes of adoring love! Mary had known the richest and most powerful men in Judæa; but the power she recognised in Jesus was something quite different. It seemed to take her soul in a grasp as light as the touch of a roseleaf, and draw it gently, but irresistibly, away from everything she had known in the past. The power of Jesus was irresistible, because it was the power of perfect love, which is stronger than the strength of many armies.

As Mary stood there gazing at the Master, he began to teach his friends who were assembled round him. He spoke of the Father in heaven, whose love yearns always toward His children, whether they are good or bad, whether they are near to Him or far away. Whenever Jesus spoke of his Father, there was a tone in his voice which thrilled the hearts of men and women, and it thrilled the heart of the listening Mary Magdalene.

Any one who knew Mary would have supposed that she was hopelessly far away from the Father who yearned toward His children. But as she listened to Jesus, she seemed to draw nearer and nearer to God. For the time

she forgot herself entirely, even forgot her sins which were so many; she thought of nothing but the heaven of perfect love which Jesus revealed to her. She became again as a little child, listening wide-eyed to a tale of wonder.

But when the Master stopped speaking, and the murmur of other and less gentle voices began all round her, the spell was broken for Mary. She had been for a time in the kingdom of heaven, with Jesus, and the shock of coming back to *her own self* was almost too terrible to bear. The memory of her sins rushed over her. She was in despair. She wanted to die. She could not endure herself, after being with the Father.

Weeping, she fell at the feet of Jesus, her face hidden in the folds of her veil. The disciples were surprised. They wondered what the Master would say to her, for she was well known for her sins. Would he tell her that she was not good enough even to hope for the kingdom of heaven?

But when Jesus saw the woman at his feet, and heard her sobs, a great pity filled his heart. He had seen her face a little while before, as she had listened spellbound to his words, and it had been like the face of an angel. And now—the dust of the road was not more humble than she.

Bending his head and looking down at her with eyes full of pitying love, he said gently:

“My sister, arise, and sin no more.”

The words were more than an invitation—they were a command which she could not have disobeyed. “Arise, and sin no more.” She arose and stood before him, her tear-stained eyes upraised to his in the very adoration of gratitude. She realised that from that moment it would never be possible for her to sin any more. For she had

had a vision of the kingdom of heaven, and the great teacher, Jesus, had not even reproached her for her wickedness, but had called her “sister”! Is it any wonder that the seven devils of her sins went out of her—never to return?

From that hour she became one of the most devoted of the Master’s followers. And in after days, when she had been dead a long, long time, and the Church of Jesus wanted to do honour to the great names of those who had served him, the name of Mary Magdalene was placed high on the list of the saints. For one who has been very bad can also become very good.

When Jesus went to Bethany, to the house of Martha, Mary Magdalene could always go with him; for Martha welcomed the other women who loved Jesus. Among the friends of the Master, no one was ever reproached for the sins of the past which had been forgiven. When they became his followers, they began a new life. It was like being born again. And Mary Magdalene, who had been so great a sinner, was now as kindly treated as the pure mother of Jesus.

One day in the house at Bethany the women were sitting at the feet of the Master, listening to his words. Martha was not with them, for she was busy, as usual, about the house, cooking and cleaning and setting things to rights. Martha often did unnecessary labour, and the cleanest house was never quite clean enough to satisfy her.

Now Martha’s younger sister, who was also called Mary, was always at the feet of Jesus whenever he was in Bethany. She could never hear enough of his talk, which made her so happy that she forgot all about the duties of the household. For Mary was a dreamer, and for her

the things of the spirit were everything and the things of the body nothing. She would not have cared had there been no dinner that day. And she did not remember that Martha was obliged to prepare a meal, and for a large number of persons, as the disciples of Jesus were all there.

The words of the Master were so beautiful that it is really no wonder Mary forgot that men had also to eat. The Bible does not state exactly what Jesus was telling them that day; but let us take any of his sayings which come into our minds, and imagine the group of devoted women, with the dreamy-eyed Mary among them, sitting at his feet and listening:

“Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

“Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.

“For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”

“Again I say unto you, that if two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven.

“For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.”

“Consider the lilies how they grow: they toil not, they spin not; and yet I say unto you, that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.

“If then God so clothe the grass, which is to-day in the field, and to-morrow is cast into the oven; how much more will he clothe you, O ye of little faith?

"And seek not ye what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, neither be ye of doubtful mind.

"For all these things do the nations of the world seek after: and your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things.

"But rather seek ye the kingdom of God; and all these things shall be added unto you."

Into this peaceful company came the good sister Martha, her eyes troubled, her face a little flushed from hurrying. She looked at Jesus as he sat there talking, surrounded by the wistful-eyed women who hung upon his words. Martha was not thinking at that moment of the kingdom of heaven, but of the large number of foods which she expected to spread on the table before her guests a little later in the day. She looked at Mary her sister, who was so absorbed that she had not even heard her come into the room. And there was a complaining tone in Martha's voice as she said to Jesus:

"Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? Bid her therefore that she help me."

Jesus looked at her troubled eyes and her flushed face. He who had fed a multitude of five thousand men with five loaves of bread and two small fishes, did not feel that so much labour was necessary to prepare a simple meal for a score of persons. A little bread, a little meat or none at all, would have been enough for Jesus and for his friends. And he said to the anxious woman:

"Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things:

"But one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her."

Then Jesus went on talking to his enchanted listeners. And we can easily believe that the restless, troubled look left Martha's eyes; that she forgot for the moment how

many mouths she had to feed that night, and stood also listening to the words of Jesus, while a dreamy smile stole over her face, as she mused on the Father who knew that they had need of sustenance for the body, and would send it in abundance to those who sought the one thing needful—the love and knowledge of Him.

CHAPTER XX

THE ENEMIES IN JERUSALEM

As Jesus grew more and more famous, the priests and Pharisees and other Jews in Jerusalem were troubled more and more by the reports they heard concerning his teaching and his miracles. Whenever he came into the Temple a great crowd gathered round him, and no one paid any attention to the priests when Jesus was near; for the priests never said anything new or interesting, while every time Jesus opened his lips he not only made the people think, but he thrilled their hearts, which the priests left cold and untouched. So the Jews in Jerusalem wanted to kill Jesus.

Though the Master knew that his life was in danger, he went up to the feast of Tabernacles; but he went a little late, after all the others had gone to Jerusalem. He felt that the time was not yet come when the predictions of his death at the hands of the Jews should be fulfilled. He had yet other work to do before he left the world and returned to God who had sent him.

When he did not come to the feast with the others, the Jews wondered where he could be. They wanted him to come, that they might kill him if possible. And there was much murmuring among the people at the feast concerning Jesus; for some said, "He is a good man," while others said, "Nay, but he deceiveth the people." The friends of the Master were even afraid to speak

openly of him, because his enemies were so powerful in Jerusalem.

About the middle of the feast Jesus appeared suddenly one day in the Temple. Those who loved him trembled with joy when they saw his face; but those who hated him trembled with anger. Quietly, as if the Temple were as safe a place for him as his own Galilee, Jesus began to teach the people, who gathered round him in such numbers that the priests and Pharisees could hardly make a passage for themselves through the crowd. This gave them an excuse for standing and listening also, which they would have been too proud to do had there been only a few persons round the Master.

He spoke with even more than his usual eloquence and charm, so that the Jews marvelled at his discourse, saying: "How knoweth this man so much, having never learned?" Because the scribes and Pharisees and priests could not understand how there could be any knowledge outside of the books which they themselves had studied with so much labour.

Jesus answered them:

"My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me"—meaning God.

For Jesus never sought to exalt himself as a man; he desired only to teach the world about his Father and the kingdom of heaven which was based upon love.

The common people of Jerusalem were surprised to see Jesus there; they wondered that he dared to come, because the Pharisees now hated him so. And they said to one another:

"Is not this he, whom they seek to kill? But, lo, he speaketh boldly, and they say nothing unto him. Do the rulers of the synagogue know indeed that this is the very Christ?"

Now there was a belief among some of the Jews that when the Christ should appear, no one would know about his birth or parentage; that it would seem as if he had come down from heaven suddenly to the world. Of course this was a foolish idea; but it tends to show how hard it is for people to believe that any person whose family they know can be altogether a great man. The well-known fact that Jesus came from Nazareth made him seem quite ordinary to the Jews, and some of them now said:

“We know this man whence he is: but when Christ cometh, no man knoweth whence he is.”

Jesus answered, saying that they knew both him and *whence* he came; but Him that had sent him, they knew not.

The Jews were very angry at these words of the Master, which implied that they knew not God. And the Pharisees and chief priests sent officers to arrest Jesus, but instead the officers only stood by and listened to him. They listened also to the people, who said:

“When Christ cometh, will he do more miracles than these which this man hath done?”

Jesus wanted men to believe on him because of the *truth* of what he taught; but most men believed on him because of his miracles; for those who could not recognise the truth could recognise a miracle—like the multitude that had followed the Master to Capernaum because of the loaves and fishes with which he had fed them in the wilderness. Human nature changes little with the passing of the centuries, and most persons in our own time would be like the old Jews, should Jesus again appear in the world—which he has promised to do, some day. But perhaps, when he comes again, he will not work miracles.

On the last day of the feast of Tabernacles, the great

day, Jesus again came to the Temple, and he cried to the assembled multitude:

"If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink."

It was this figurative language of Jesus which charmed his friends and enraged his enemies. He meant that if any man thirsted for the love and knowledge of God, he should come unto him and drink of that knowledge and that love. For it was always the *love* which men and women felt in the Master which made him irresistible. They were not wise enough to judge of the truth of his doctrine; but they could feel that he loved them, and that made them happy. It was just this that he wanted them to feel about God. And when they heard the invitation to come to him and drink, some of them said:

"Of a truth, this is the Prophet. This is the Christ."

But others retorted:

"Shall Christ come out of Galilee?"

And there was a disagreement among the people about Jesus; for some who wanted to believe on him could not bring themselves to do so, because he had come from a poor and despised quarter of the country.

When the chief priests and the Pharisees saw the Master still preaching in the Temple, and when they saw the very officers whom they had sent to arrest him, standing and listening to his words, they said angrily to the officers:

"Why have ye not taken him?"

The eyes of the officers were shining with their enthusiasm for Jesus, who had touched their hearts with his love, and they said to the priests and Pharisees:

"Never man spake like this man!"

"Are ye also deceived?" cried the Pharisees, now

angrier than ever. "Have any of the rulers of the synagogue or any of the Pharisees believed on him?" And they told the officers that these common people who followed Jesus, these common people who knew not the law, were cursed.

"Now there was among the rulers of the synagogue one man who loved Jesus. This was Nicodemus, who had visited the Master by night because he feared his fellow Jews. Nicodemus now tried to pacify the Pharisees, saying:

"Doth our law judge any man, before it hear him, and know what he doeth?"

"Art thou also of Galilee?" sneered the Pharisees, looking scornfully at Nicodemus, as if he had disgraced himself by even attempting to defend this Nazarene. And they added: "Search the Scriptures, and look: for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet."

Then, raising their chins in the air, and swinging their long garments in such a way as to attract as much attention as possible as they moved through the streets, the haughty and self-righteous Pharisees went to their own homes.

Nicodemus also went to his house; but he walked slowly and haltingly, his head bent in troubled thought. Why was he not braver? he wondered. He knew that his associates would put him out of the synagogue if he openly proclaimed his belief in Jesus, and yet he longed to proclaim it. What was the value of his respected position in Jerusalem, if he were a slave to the opinions of others? That was not to be free! He envied the humble Nazarenes who followed Jesus from city to city, for they, having nothing to lose, could gain everything. A disciple of the Master! The very words made Nicodemus thrill from head to feet.

Had he known at that time just when and why he would finally put aside his fear and stand boldly with the friends of Jesus, Nicodemus would have been even sadder than he was. But the future was hidden from him.

The following day Jesus again went into the Temple, and all the people came to him, and he sat down and taught them. As he was teaching, the scribes and Pharisees, who were always plotting to entangle him in his talk, brought to him a certain woman who had done a forbidden thing, and they set her in the midst of the crowd before Jesus. Then, interrupting his discourse, they named the sin which the woman had committed, and said:

"Now Moses in the law commanded us, that such should be stoned: but what sayest thou?"

For they knew that Jesus was always full of pity for wrongdoers; and if, by reason of his pity they could get him to say something against the law of Moses, they would have an excuse for killing him.

John, the beloved disciple, was with Jesus at this time, and he tells us that the Master stooped down and wrote with his finger on the ground, as if he had not heard them. For he was indignant that these hypocritical Pharisees, who were themselves much worse than the woman who stood trembling with shame and fear before them—indignant that these rulers in the synagogue should dare to make an unfortunate woman the means whereby they sought to entangle the Christ. John does not tell us what Jesus wrote on the ground, and it is possible that it was nothing of importance, that he merely wrote to concentrate his own attention and to calm himself.

But the Pharisees persisted in their accusation of the woman, and asked Jesus again what should be done with

her. At length the Master raised himself, and turning to them with a look which penetrated to their shifty and hypocritical souls, he said quietly:

“He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her.”

No master of irony ever uttered anything which for brevity and depth of meaning can be compared with that simple sentence, spoken so quietly by Jesus, as he sat there looking at the Pharisees. Then he turned away from them, and stooping down once more, continued to write with his finger on the ground.

The Pharisees felt themselves growing red in the face. Their foreheads burned and their palms tingled, for their conscience convicted them, and they knew that they were far worse sinners than the woman they had wished to stone. They were ashamed even to look at each other. Casting one quick and humiliated glance at the back of Jesus, as he stooped there writing on the ground, they turned one after another and went away, beginning with the eldest even unto the last.

When Jesus raised himself he saw no one but the woman standing before him. She stood clutching her breast, her head bent with shame, her eyes fixed on the ground. And the Master said, gently:

“Woman, where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee?”

“No man, Lord,” she answered, in a voice so low that one who stood by could hardly hear it.

“Neither do I condemn thee,” said Jesus. “Go, and sin no more.”

The woman went away.

And the Pharisees, when they had had time to recover themselves a little from the shame of the Master’s reproof, vowed each secretly (for this was a time when they did

not counsel together) that Jesus should not live much longer upon the earth.

Twice after that they took up stones to throw at him, but each time he passed quietly away from them, going about his business of healing the sick, and restoring sight to the blind, and preaching the love of all creatures. And more and more the people followed him.

CHAPTER XXI

THE RAISING OF LAZARUS

You remember the two sisters, Martha the industrious housekeeper and Mary the dreamer, who lived in the little town of Bethany, not far from Jerusalem. You remember how Jesus had gently reproved Martha, when she complained to him because Mary listened so much to his beautiful talk about God that she forgot to do her share of the housework.

Now Mary and Martha had a brother named Lazarus, whom Jesus loved very much. Lazarus was a man of some importance in the little town of Bethany, and he had many friends in Jerusalem. He was of a gentle and dreamy spirit, like his sister Mary; and he also loved to listen to Jesus when he talked about God and about the kingdom of heaven, where they would be like the angels, caring only for the love of God and the love of one another.

When Jesus was far away from Bethany, travelling about the country with his disciples, the brother and sister, Lazarus and Mary, used to talk about him all day long; and sometimes, for many days together, Lazarus was so exalted with his thoughts of the kingdom of heaven that he did not care to eat the food prepared for him by his other sister, the faithful Martha. For Jesus had said that in heaven they would be like the angels, and Lazarus was sure that angels did not eat or drink.

Martha, as you will remember, was always troubled about many things, and she was especially troubled when

her brother would not eat. She also desired to enter the kingdom of heaven, with the other friends of Jesus; but she could not see why men should want to stop eating and drinking while they were still on earth. She was always telling Lazarus that he would make himself sick with his fasting and his sitting-up of nights to pray alone or with his sister Mary.

And at last Lazarus did really become sick, so sick that he could not leave his bed, and did not even feel well enough to pray with the gentle Mary when she came and sat beside him, holding his hand and trying to cheer him with talk about Jesus. He wanted only to lie still, with his large, hollow eyes fixed on the patch of blue sky which could be seen through the little window at the foot of his bed.

Martha was now thoroughly alarmed about her brother, and human nature being much the same in those far days as now, she could not refrain from saying all the time, "I told you so! I told you so!"

Each time she turned away from the bed of Lazarus, with the nice hot broth which he could not drink; each time she looked at him lying there so still, gazing at the little patch of blue sky through the window, Martha's face grew more and more troubled, and little lines of anxiety would come between her straight black eyebrows.

Mary was troubled also, and she was grieved at Martha, who made her feel that she was as much to blame as Lazarus for the sickness which had come upon him. If Mary had not encouraged Lazarus in too much dreaming and too much praying, Martha said, he would not have refused for weeks to eat his proper food, and he would not now be lying sick unto death. And Mary's eyes were full of tears, not only with anxiety for her brother, but with grief at her sister's reproaches.

"Oh, if Jesus would only come!" she said to herself all day long. At last, toward the evening of the second day, she said it aloud to Martha, "Oh, if Jesus would only come!" And Martha said, "Yes, we need him."

Then the two sisters asked a neighbour of theirs to go and find Jesus, whom they knew to be preaching with his disciples in Peræa, and to give Jesus this message: "Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick."

Now when the messenger, the neighbour of Mary and Martha, found Jesus and gave him the message of the sisters, Jesus did not seem to be distressed; though, as every one knew, he deeply loved Lazarus and Mary and Martha. And his disciples wondered that he should not be troubled.

Jesus, seeing the questions in their eyes, told them that the sickness of Lazarus was not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby. The disciples did not understand his words. They could not see how the sickness of any man, least of all that of a faithful creature like Lazarus of Bethany, could bring glory unto God or to the Son of God.

Jesus stayed two days longer in the place where he was then preaching, and he healed there many sick persons. His disciples, while they wondered that he did not want to go to Bethany to cure Lazarus, were really glad that he did not; for they remembered how the Jews in Judæa had wanted to stone the Master the last time he had been in their country, and Bethany, the home of Lazarus, was in Judæa.

But at the end of the two days, Jesus said to his disciples:

"Let us go into Judæa again."

"Master," they answered, "the Jews of late sought to stone thee; and goest thou thither again?"

Jesus replied: "Are there not twelve hours in the day? If any man walk in the day, he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world. But if a man walk in the night, he stumbleth, because there is no light in him."

John, the beloved disciple, was the only one who understood this saying and remembered it. But none of them understood the next thing which Jesus said:

"Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep."

The disciples answered, "Lord, if he sleep, he shall do well," meaning that if he slept he would recover.

Then Jesus, seeing that they did not understand him, told them plainly: "Lazarus is dead."

The disciples were no longer astonished when the Master told them of something which was happening or had happened far away; for they had now come to believe that he knew all things. And when Jesus said that Lazarus was dead, they knew that it must be so. One of the disciples said that he was sorry that the Master had not been there to save Lazarus from death, as he had saved so many others; but Jesus answered:

"I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, to the intent ye may believe; nevertheless, let us go unto him."

And still they did not understand all that Jesus meant. But Thomas, the disciple whom they called "doubting Thomas," because he did not believe things so readily as the others, said to his fellow disciples:

"Let us also go, that we may die with him."

For these men who followed Jesus were much troubled by the enmity which some of the Jews in Judæa had shown to their Master; and Thomas especially, who always looked on the dark side, believed that Jesus would be killed if he went to Bethany where the dead Lazarus

was, and that all his disciples would be killed with him. If Thomas had lived in our day he would have been called a pessimist; for a pessimist is a man who, when he looks at a rosebush in the sunshine, sees only the *shadow* cast by the rosebush, and not the sun which causes the shadow, nor the blossoms on the bush.

As they journeyed southward into Judæa, the disciples noticed that Jesus was more sad than usual; and they questioned among themselves whether he was depressed because of the death of Lazarus, or because he was afraid the Jews would kill him. But it was really neither of these things. He was meditating the most important miracle which he had ever performed, for he meant to bring Lazarus to life again.

When they were still some distance from Bethany, they learned from a man whom they met on the road that Lazarus was not only dead, as Jesus had declared, but that he had been lying in the grave four days. Jesus knew that Mary and Martha were broken-hearted at their brother's death, and that they could not understand why he had not come to them when they had sent him word that Lazarus was sick.

At the home of Mary and Martha was a company of their friends, from Jerusalem and elsewhere, who were trying to comfort the grieving sisters; and some of these friends declared that Jesus should have come before, if he intended to come at all. But the gentle Mary, though her eyes were full of tears, reproved them for criticising anything which Jesus did or did not do; for, as she told them, even his neglect was more loving than the kindness of every one else in the world.

Martha, when she learned that Jesus was coming, went out to meet him; but Mary sat still in the house, for she would not hasten, by even a few moments, the

time that Jesus himself had chosen to comfort her. Yet as the minutes passed by her heart beat fast, for she wanted to see Jesus more than she wanted anything else in the world just then. Was there deep in her soul a secret hope that Jesus might do for the dead Lazarus what he had done for the little daughter of Jairus? I do not know; but Mary had great faith, and to her loving heart the will of Jesus was like the will of God. Had she heard him promise to create a man out of a handful of dust, as Adam is said to have been created by God in the beginning of the world, she would have watched to see the dust take form and breath and colour.

When Martha, who had gone out to meet Jesus, saw him in the distance surrounded, as usual, by many people, the tears of gladness sprang to her eyes. She could not pray so much as Mary, nor in such lovely words; for her prayers took the form of useful actions for others, which may be, after all, the kind of prayer that God likes best. But Martha loved Jesus with her whole heart; and though she could not imagine so well as Mary could what she would be willing to do for love of him, when the time for action came she could do just as much. And when she met Jesus coming toward Bethany, she went up to him and said, in her quiet, determined way:

“Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died. But I know that even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee.”

“Thy brother shall rise again,” said Jesus, with a loving smile.

“I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day,” replied Martha. Her eyes were anxious and full of questions; for she, too, like Mary, remembered hearing about the daughter of Jairus, who had been dead, yet lived.

Jesus, as if following her thought, said gently:

"I am the resurrection, and the life; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?"

"Yes, Lord," said Martha; "I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world."

Seeing that there were many other persons pressing around Jesus and wishing speech with him, Martha turned away and walked back toward her own house. Personal grief is very important to the one who grieves, and it might naturally seem to Martha that Jesus should put aside all these other persons and come straight to her house to comfort her; yet she had learned from him, in other days, to consider the desires of others as well as her own desires. In the crowd that pressed around Jesus there on the outskirts of the town, demanding speech with him, there might, thought Martha, be somebody whose need was greater than her own.

On the way back to her house she thought of what Jesus had said to her: "I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live." Surely, she reasoned, in saying those words to her just then, he had meant that she should understand them in more than the figurative sense. He had meant more than that resurrection at the last day, in the kingdom of heaven, which Lazarus had dreamed about so much. Her heart was full of hope.

When she reached her house she found Mary, her sister, sitting with the friends who had come to comfort them concerning the death of their brother. She went and whispered to Mary secretly:

"The Master is come, and calleth for thee."

As soon as Mary heard this she ran out of the house, and the two sisters hurried back together to the place where Jesus was. Mary was so happy because Jesus had asked for her. Perhaps he had even thought of her a few times during the weeks when he had been preaching in the villages of the north. That Jesus should think of her sometimes, when he was away, meant more to Mary than it would have meant to her to be seated upon the throne of Herod, the King. For great love is always humble, and thankful for little things.

Now the Master was not yet come into the town, but was still in that place where Martha had met him. When Mary first caught sight of him in the distance, her eyes filled with tears. Her grief for Lazarus burst forth afresh, now that Jesus was here to share it with her and to comfort her.

The Jews, their friends and neighbours, who had been with Mary in the house and had tried to console her, when they saw her rise up hastily and go out, supposed that she had gone to the grave of Lazarus, to weep for him. And they also rose up and followed her and Martha along the road.

When Mary came to the place where Jesus was, she fell down at his feet, weeping, and she said to him the very words which Martha had said to him before:

“Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died.”

When Jesus saw Mary weeping, and the Jews who had followed her weeping also, he groaned in the spirit and was troubled. For a moment he could have wished that he had come down here sooner, when they first sent for him, and had saved them all this grief. For though he knew that what he meant to do would be better in the end, and would bring more glory to the name of God;

yet the heart of Jesus was so tender that the sight of others' suffering was almost unendurable to him always. That is one of the reasons why the world has loved him so much for nearly two thousand years.

Jesus asked the sisters where they had laid Lazarus, and they answered:

"Lord, come and see."

Jesus wept.

And the Jews who had followed Mary and Martha, when they saw the tears of Jesus, said: "Behold, how much he loved him!"

But some of the Jews said among themselves, as they walked behind Jesus and the two sisters to the tomb of Lazarus:

"Could not this man, which opened the eyes of the blind, have caused that even this man should not have died?"

Jesus, who always knew what was passing in the minds of others, must have felt that they were blaming him for having left his friend to die alone, instead of coming to save him. And the tears which Jesus shed were not only for the sufferings of Mary and Martha and Lazarus himself, but also for the unbelieving people who could not understand the power of God unless they saw some miracle performed before their eyes.

Still groaning in spirit and weeping for the grief of all mankind, and for mankind's lack of faith, Jesus came to the grave of Lazarus. It was a cave in the rock, like so many of the tombs of Judæa, and a large stone was laid upon it, closing the mouth of the cave.

As Jesus stood looking at that stone, which shut the body of his dead friend away from the daylight, all the Jews stood round, weeping and groaning. The sound of their lamentations was terrible to Jesus.

"Take ye away the stone," he said.

Martha reminded Jesus that her brother was four days dead, and that by this time his body had begun to decompose. But Jesus answered her:

"Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?"

Mary and Martha clung close together, for now they really understood that Jesus would do some wonderful work. Before this they had hoped it, but they had not been sure. They questioned each other with their eyes; and the Jews, their friends and neighbours, stopped weeping and lamenting, as if they also understood that some great thing was about to take place.

Then the Jews, obeying the command of Jesus, took away the stone which hid the mouth of the tomb. Their faces were very serious, and each man and woman looked intently at the Master, who stood there before the mouth of the tomb, in the attitude of prayer. They saw Jesus lift up his eyes to heaven, and they heard him say:

"Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me. And I knew that thou hearest me always: but because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that thou hast sent me."

They who stood by saw that the face of Jesus was shining with a bright light, as if the spirit within had made his features transparent. And they held their breath, trembling, feeling the power which went out from him. Suddenly they heard Jesus cry with a loud voice:

"Lazarus, come forth!"

The hands of the sisters Mary and Martha were clasped so tightly that the nails cut into the tender flesh; but they did not feel pain, so excited were they. They hardly breathed. Their ears, made keen with expectation, caught a faint rustling, like that of shaken linen, from the

inside of the tomb; and then they heard another sound, like a sandalled foot moving over a stone floor. Then—and they wondered afterward why they had not fainted at the sound—they heard a low and muffled cough which came from the inside of the grave.

A moment later—was that really their brother, standing there in the mouth of the tomb, bound hand and foot with graveclothes, and with a linen napkin round his chin? His eyes were wide and staring, his face deadly pale, and his arms underneath the binding graveclothes moved slightly, as if he struggled to be free.

“Loose him, and let him go,” said Jesus; and the Jews rushed forward to unwind the cloths. Their hands trembled so that they could hardly do the work, and Lazarus himself was obliged with one free hand to help unloose the other.

When at last he stood quite free, he looked around him in bewilderment. He had seen already the face of Jesus, so white and calm and full of power; and now he saw the faces of his sisters, still red and swollen from weeping. Mary and Martha were so frightened that they did not dare to go to their brother, until Jesus should bid them.

Lazarus, turning his head, surveyed the open door of the tomb where he had lain for four days. Then he understood and moaned a little, for the warm blood coursing once more through his stiffened veins caused him a sharp, stinging pain in every part of his body. And the labour of breathing was like the lifting of a great weight with every heaving motion of his stiffened chest.

But Jesus, with a pitying smile, laid his hands upon him, and suddenly the pain all went away. Lazarus breathed freely again, as those breathe who have never

been dead, and the blood in his veins thrilled him with pleasure instead of pain. Those who watched him, holding their breath, saw a wan smile flutter across his face, into which the warm blood had come again, restoring to it the colour and freshness of life.

Only his eyes were different to what they had been before; for one who has been dead knows many things which he would not care to tell to those who have never felt the chilling embrace of the tomb. What was it Lazarus had seen on the other side of the door of death? We do not know; we shall never know, till we pass through that door ourselves, some day.

As he walked slowly home to the little house in Bethany with Jesus and his sisters, Lazarus did not speak many words, and Mary and Martha could not speak, either. There are some things which words, with all their subtle meanings, can never hope to express. But the eyes of Mary and Martha turned constantly to the calm face of Jesus, who walked so quietly beside them. The disciples of Jesus had, at his request, made all the friends and neighbours—the Jews who had been with them at the tomb and who had seen the raising of Lazarus—keep back from this reunited family and the great teacher who had reunited them. The four walked quite alone along the road; and the people who lived beside the way, looking from the doorways of their houses at the slowly moving group, could not believe their eyes; they thought that the man in white garments, who was with Jesus and the two women, must be some stranger in the town, who looked and walked like the dead man Lazarus.

Behind them, at the still open door of the tomb, the Jews were talking and gesticulating together, and questioning the disciples who remained with them. Had Lazarus really been dead? If not, how could he have

lain four days in the airless rock-chamber of the tomb, and ever breathed again? Who *was* this man, this Jesus of Nazareth, who could perform such wonders? Was he really, as his disciples claimed, the one and only Messiah of the Jews, whom the ages had waited for? The Messiah, when he should come, would surely do such things as this man did. Yes, he must really be the Christ. So the Jews talked and questioned together, not only there beside the open and musty-smelling entrance to the tomb, but later when they went down into Jerusalem. And there was great excitement in Jerusalem and in Bethany, and in all the other towns round about, as the news quickly spread from mouth to mouth, and from home to home. And now many in Jerusalem believed in Jesus, that he was the Son of God, where only a few had believed before.

And some of those who had witnessed the miracle went to the Pharisees in Jerusalem, telling them that Jesus had brought a dead man to life at Bethany, and that more people than ever were following him and believing on him.

Now these Pharisees were very self-righteous, and very proud of their knowledge of the old Jewish law. Jesus himself called them hypocrites; and as Jesus was inclined to give all men the benefit of every doubt, we may believe that the Pharisees were really hypocritical. They had so long been accustomed to having men come to them to ask what was right and what was wrong, that they were jealous at the growing crowds that followed Jesus, the crowds of men who now asked Jesus what was right and wrong instead of asking the Pharisees.

It was the same jealous spirit which had led Cain, the son of Adam, to slay his brother Abel, as you have read in the Old Testament. It was the same jealousy which

had made King Herod want to destroy the infant Jesus, because the Magi had called him "King of the Jews," after his birth had been revealed to them by the Star in the East. The spirit of jealousy is the most evil spirit in the world; it even makes little children hate each other sometimes, because one of them has something which the other wants. Those who wish to be like Jesus should destroy this spirit in their hearts; and whenever they feel jealous of any person, they should remember that in the heart of that person is a little place where God delights to dwell. For when we realise that God dwells in another, and looks out at us through his eyes, we cannot possibly hate him or be jealous of him.

But the hypocritical Pharisees did not really love God; they only liked to talk about Him, because it made them seem important in the eyes of others. So, every time they heard that Jesus had done something which they could not do; every time they heard a man praise Jesus and declare that he was the Son of God, the jealous hatred which they had for him grew stronger and stronger, until they wished that he might be killed.

They pretended to think that Jesus was of no importance. They pretended to think this because they wanted to think it; but in their hearts they knew it was not so, and that only made them hate him all the more. They even tried to forget that he existed; but in the night-time, when all the world was still, and the old Pharisees lay upon their backs in bed, the thought of Jesus came to trouble them. They simply *could not* put him out of their minds. In the daytime it was not so hard for them, because they had many things to do. They could walk up and down the streets, making parade of their piety, and they could argue, argue, argue, with any one who had the time for argument, upon the everlasting ques-

tions of the subtle differences between tweedledum and tweedledee.

We are told by a great French scholar, whose books you will read perhaps when you are older, that the manners of the Pharisees were often ridiculous and excited the smiles of even those who believed in them. They had many nicknames among the people, because of their peculiar ways. They were called "bandy-legged Pharisees," because they dragged their feet in walking, in the attempt to appear very stately and dignified. They were called "bloody-browed Pharisees," because they walked with their eyes shut so as not to look at the pretty women, and thus knocked their heads so often against the walls that their foreheads were always bloody. Yes, in the day-time they could keep from worrying about Jesus, even when they were talking against him.

But in the quiet night it was different. They would lie in bed upon their old backs, as I have told you, and in the vexation of their thinking about Jesus, they would pluck the hairs from their long beards and cast them from them, as if by so doing they cast away the thoughts of Jesus which burned and burned in their minds until their heads ached with the pressure of their thinking.

But when they learned that Jesus had raised Lazarus from the dead; when they heard, whichever way they turned, the constant talk about this miracle which had been performed almost at their very doors, they could not endure any longer their jealousy and their anger. And they sought out the chief priests, who were attached to the great Temple, and the Pharisees held a council with the chief priests as to what could be done in order to rid themselves of Jesus.

"What shall we do?" they asked each other, with anxious eyes, "for this man works many miracles. If

we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him: and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation."

For always, among the Jews of that time, there was the fear and hatred of the Romans who ruled over them. And the priests and Pharisees now feared that if the people more and more came to believe on Jesus, the Romans would try to do away with the old Jewish religion altogether. If such a change took place, the priests would lose all their authority, and the Pharisees would find no one to listen to them when they argued, argued, argued about the letter of the law.

Now the Jews of that time changed their high priest every year or two, for political reasons, and the high priest for that year was named Caiaphas. He was the son-in-law of a former high priest, Annas; he was a Sadducee of the most unbelieving type; and though Caiaphas had a very good opinion of himself, he would have been surprised had any one told him that his fame would last forever. He would have been still more surprised could he have known the reason why people would talk about him in the centuries to come. For though these priests and Pharisees hated Jesus, and gave so much thought to him, they did not realise how very important he was. They did not realise that for thousands of years the world would be interested in every smallest action of his life; and that their own names would be hated for all these ages, just because they were the enemies of Jesus.

When the priests and Pharisees had talked together a long time, about the raising of Lazarus and all the excitement it had produced, they agreed among themselves that the love which Jesus inspired in the people was a menace to their own place and authority. Then Caiaphas the high priest arose in his seat, and looking round upon the

circle of sharp and discontented faces before him, he spoke these momentous words:

"Ye know nothing at all, nor consider that it is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not."

Then, gathering his robe about him, Caiaphas stalked out of the room, leaving his fellow-counsellors to think about his words. The priests and Pharisees who were left sitting there looked at each other questioningly, for every man knew what Caiaphas meant: that they must kill Jesus in order to save themselves.

Now the time of the Jewish Passover was near, and the priests asked one another:

"What think ye, that he will not come to the feast?"

And they nodded their heads, that he would probably come; and their sharp eyes grew sharper, and they pulled viciously at their long beards as they walked to and fro, meditating how they could kill Jesus. And they gave orders to their servants that if any man knew where Jesus was, he should tell the high priests, that they might take him.

Jesus, who always knew what was passing in the minds of others, knew now that the priests and Pharisees were plotting to kill him; and he went away from Bethany with his disciples, leaving Lazarus and Mary and Martha behind. He went into a place called Ephraim, near to the wilderness of Judaea where John the Baptist had so often walked crying, "Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." And Jesus stayed there with his disciples, healing those who were sick, and telling people about the love of God.

But his disciples noticed now that his eyes were often very sad, and that he did not like to hear them talk about

Lazarus, and of how he had been raised from the tomb. For Jesus knew that the bringing of his dead friend to life, while it had brought much glory to the name of God and to the Son of God, would cause him serious trouble in the end.

CHAPTER XXII

JESUS AND THE LITTLE CHILDREN

Of all the beautiful stories which the Gospels tell us about Jesus, there is none lovelier than the one which tells how he blessed the little children in Judæa, not long before his death. Jesus loved all the little children in the world. He liked to look in their pure faces, fresh and rosy as the petals of a flower. It seemed to him that from their little eyes God looked upon the world and looked at him, and their voices were sweet music in his ears. He never found them tiresome, with their prattle and their questions; for how can a child learn things except by asking those who are older than he is?

In one of the villages near to the wilderness, where he had been teaching the people, and healing many who were afflicted with disease or grief, among those whom he had cured were several men and women who had little children. And these fathers and mothers said to themselves and to one another:

“As the Master has such power, and as he comes from God, and as he only passes through our city, and we may never see his face again, let us ask him to lay his hands upon our children and to bless them, that they may live and thrive, and grow to be good men and women.”

And the fathers and mothers also said:

“How beautiful is the face of Jesus when he prays! If, when his face is thus illuminated, and the Holy Spirit, hovering invisible in the air above his head, listens for

his words—if at such a time he should lay his hands upon our children, surely the Holy Spirit would descend on them. They might see visions, too, which they would remember all their lives.”

So the fathers and mothers, having bathed their children and combed their waving hair, put on them their best linen garments. They told the little ones that they must be very good and quiet, and that perhaps the wonderful man Jesus, whom they had seen at a distance in the marketplace, would touch them with his hands. And the children were so much excited at the very thought of being touched by the wonderful man with the shining face, that they trembled all over, and their little voices shook as they promised to be good. The fathers and mothers gave each little child a flower which it might lay at the feet of the wonderful man, but must not put into his hands, which should be left free to bless them; then they led the children out into the sunshine and toward the square of the city, where Jesus sat with his disciples under a spreading tree.

Those who love deeply and purely are not afraid of seeming bold, because their desires are unselfish. And the parents of the children, in leading their little ones to Jesus, did not even ask themselves if they were taking liberties with a great man. With their children they went right up to him, where he sat under the big tree, and they said:

“Master, will you not lay your hands upon our children, that God may bless them for your sake?”

But the disciples of Jesus, good men though they were, and men who loved Jesus deeply, were sometimes a little too conscious of their position as the most intimate friends of the Master. They sometimes felt that it was for them to protect Jesus from the too near approach of those who

needed him, not realising that they themselves were only great because of their love for Jesus and because of his love for them. And now, when the disciples saw the fathers and mothers, with the group of little children crowding round the Master, they rushed forward and would have thrust them back from Jesus, sitting there so beautiful and benign under the tree.

But Jesus arose from his seat, and reproved his disciples. We do not know all that he said to them, because the disciples who told the story only admitted that the Master reproved them; but, knowing him as we do, and knowing his love for the whole world, we may be sure that he reminded them that the Son of God was sent to *all* men, and to all women, and especially to all little children. And then he said:

“Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God. Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein.

“Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven.”

And Jesus sat down again under the tree, and called the little children to him. They were not afraid of him because he was so great; but when he smiled at them, they climbed into his lap, they hung about his neck, they clung to his knees, they laid their little heads against his sleeve, rubbing it softly with their cheeks. Some of them prattled to him, asking him childish questions, though their parents had told them that they must be quiet. And he answered all the questions, as if the little children had been great philosophers, and as if the questions which they asked had been of value to the nations.

Then, when they had grown quiet with content, Jesus

laid his hands upon the head of each little child, one after another, and raising his eyes to heaven, he asked his Father—who lived in heaven, and who also lived in the heart of every one in the world who would let Him live there—to bless the little children.

And the parents, standing a little way apart and looking on at the lovely scene, felt something surging in their own hearts which they had never felt before, as if the God who wanted to dwell within them were mutely calling attention to His presence. And their eyes filled with happy tears, so that the Master sitting there under the tree with the children in his arms seemed to be seen through a veil. But they who see Christ through the veil of their own loving tears, see him more plainly than when their eyes are clear.

When Jesus had blessed the children, and his eyes and his thoughts came back from heaven to regard the world around him, he gently placed upon their feet the little ones who nestled in his lap; then he himself arose and led them to their parents. With a smile of parting for all, he beckoned to his disciples, and passed out from among the people into a little house near by, where one lay sick whom he desired to heal.

And the fathers and mothers of the children walked slowly home with their little ones. Their hearts were so full of love, that they could not talk together, and the families separated in silence, each going to their own house.

The children never forgot the happenings of that day. Even the smallest of them, a little daughter, who could hardly lisp the name of Mother, remembered vividly her whole life long the beautiful man with the loving smile who had laid his hands upon her little head, and in whose strong arms she had nestled as a baby. And when she

had grown to be a woman, she told her own children all about it; and when her children were grown to be men and women themselves, and had other little children of their own, she told her grandchildren how Jesus of Nazareth, the great Messiah of the Jews, had blessed her fifty years before. And whenever her grandchildren were naughty, as all little ones sometimes are, she had only to whisper the words of Jesus to make them good again:

“Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God.”

CHAPTER XXIII

JESUS AND THE RICH YOUNG MAN

As even children may observe, if they look closely at their life and at the life about them, when anything happens which makes them very happy, it is generally followed by something which makes them unhappy; and a day of calmness and simplicity is likely to be followed by a day when things are puzzling. This seems to be a law of life, which no one can escape; and it was often illustrated in the history of Jesus.

After those lovely moments with the simple little children whose parents had brought them for his blessing, the next person who came to Jesus was a rich young man whose life was anything but simple.

When the Master and his disciples had gone out of the village in which he had blessed the children, and as they were walking slowly along the country lane which was bordered with the green leaves and the blossoms of early spring, a young man in a rich red dress came running after Jesus, and knelt at his feet in the dusty road. As the Master bent his head and looked at the eager-faced young man, kneeling there in the dust before him, the young man said:

“Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?”

And Jesus answered him:

“Why callest thou me good? There is none good but

one, and that is God. But if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments."

"Which?" asked the rich young man; for he had been brought up among the Pharisees, and he knew well the ten commandments of the Jews. Jesus answered, naming a few of them:

"Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not speak falsely of thy neighbour, Honour thy father and thy mother."

"All these commandments have I kept from my youth up," said the young man. "What lack I yet?"

And Jesus, looking down at him, seeing his eager face and his eyes aflame with aspiration, felt a great love for the young man surge up in his heart. He knew that the young man was one of the Pharisees, that he was a ruler with much power; and neither the rulers nor the Pharisees had generally been willing to listen to the teaching of the Master. But the eyes of this young man were clear and honest, they looked straight into the eye of Jesus; and though he was a ruler, he did not hesitate in his fine robe to kneel there in the dust. Why, with this faith and enthusiasm, should he not really follow the Christ, leaving behind him the worldly things which he had loved in the past? At that moment it seemed possible to Jesus. And he put out his hand and raised the young man to his feet.

For a moment they stood there, face to face, and eye to eye, the Messiah in his white garments and the young ruler in his embroidered robe. And the two, so different in external things, felt one with each other in heart. The flame of feeling which we call sympathy was burning between them; and Jesus said, very gently, laying his hand upon the arm of the young ruler:

"If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast,

and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me."

Over the eyes of the young man there came a shadow of sadness; for he was very rich, and Jesus had told him to give away all that he had. He thought of his palaces, of his gold and jewels; but, most of all, he thought of his friends who would ridicule and blame him if he should do as the Master said. A man who would have no fear of poverty or hardship, is often afraid of the laughter of his friends. And the eyes of the young ruler fell before the steady eyes of Jesus, which seemed to be looking down into his soul. Then, without another word, he turned sadly away from the one whom he had called Master, and with slow step and head bent low in thought, he walked back along the road toward the city—back to his palace and his riches.

Jesus watched him for a few moments, and his eyes were sad and thoughtful. Then, turning to the disciples who were with him, he said:

"Verily, I say unto you, That a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven."

His disciples looked at him with wonder, for before they met Jesus, they had always been taught to respect rich men for the sake of their riches. The Master, seeing the puzzled look in their eyes, said to them:

"It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God."

And the disciples, who had been puzzled before, were now amazed, and they said to Jesus:

"Who then can be saved?"

Jesus saw that they were deeply troubled in their minds by what he had just said; and he added, very gently:

"The things which are impossible with men, are possible with God."

Then honest Peter, looking after the brilliant red-robed figure of the young ruler as it disappeared in the distance, and looking from that to the plain and dusty garments of himself and his fellow disciples, said to the Master, with just a little touch of conscious virtue:

"Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed thee. What shall *we* have therefore?"

And Jesus answered him, saying:

"There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel's, but he shall receive an hundredfold, now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, *with persecutions*; and in the world to come eternal life. But many that are first shall be last, and the last first."

And the disciples, feeling reproved for having prided themselves upon the fact that they were faithful to Jesus, when every beautiful thing in their lives had been given them freely by him, walked slowly down the road after the Master. And each man asked himself in his heart, what were the little things which he had sacrificed in comparison with what Jesus had given him? Would he not rather walk with Jesus, cold and hungry and homeless along the roads, than to have all the riches of the world without him? For the disciples really loved their Master, though he was far too great for them to understand. And when they thought of the rich young ruler, in his embroidered red gown, and of the sadness of his eyes as he turned away from Jesus, they thanked God that they themselves were poor, and shabby, and that no palaces raised their carven walls between them and the Master whom they worshipped.

Jesus, feeling the sadness of their hearts, turned and looked at them with his great loving eyes. Then he smiled, and they could not feel sad any longer. And he began to tell them lovely things about the kingdom of heaven, where they would be as the angels, standing with him in the presence of God. And the breeze blew softly through the trees, and the little river sang beside the road, and the birds twittered in the branches, and the great golden sun sank slowly to his home in the western sky, leaving a blaze of crimson and orange clouds behind him. And Jesus and his friends walked on together toward the sunset.

Back in the city they had left, the rich young ruler sat alone in a splendid room in his palace, brooding. He wished that he were a poor man, even a beggar, that he might follow Jesus. He looked about him at the gorgeous fabrics upon the floor and on the walls. Why could he not exchange them for the green grass by the wayside, and the freedom of a wandering disciple of the Master? The ceiling of his palace room was made of precious marbles, which glittered in the lamplight. Why could he not be lying with those other men out under the stars, which glittered far more brilliantly? He did not want to be a ruler. He wanted to be a disciple. But, as Jesus had said: "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God."

Late in the night, a servant of the young ruler passed his door, and seeing his lamp alight, looked in. His master was still sitting there, with his chin in his hands, and his eyes fixed on vacancy. Far off somewhere in the darkness, a dog was howling. And the servant stole softly out, leaving his master alone. Then the servant

went to the bare closet which served him for a chamber, and lying down upon the hard board which was his bed, he dreamed beautiful dreams of Jesus and the kingdom of heaven. For what the young ruler had not dared to be, his servant was already.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE MOTHER OF JAMES AND JOHN

Among those who followed Jesus were many women, though they did not follow him everywhere, nor at all times. I have told you how his own mother loved to go with him from city to city, hearing him preach and seeing him heal the sick, who everywhere crowded round him. I have told you of Mary Magdalene, the beautiful woman who in the past had not been good, but who now was perhaps better than any of the other women, except the mother of Jesus. I have told you of the sisters, Mary and Martha, whose brother, Lazarus, Jesus had raised from the tomb. And now I will tell you about Salome, the wife of Zebedee the fisherman, and the mother of the disciples James and John.

Salome also loved Jesus much. In one way she cared more for him than for her own sons; but in another way she did not, for the love of a mother is unlike any other love on earth. She adored Jesus as her Master, and the Master of her sons; but she loved James and John in the same way she had loved them when they were little babies — *her* little babies. They seemed to her more wonderful than any other men in the world, excepting Jesus; and to her, as to so many others, Jesus seemed something more than a man. At any moment had she seen Jesus rise up into the clouds, like the angel which she felt him in her heart to be, Salome would not have been surprised.

John, as you know, was quite young, but James was

older, and the mother of these two men was almost an old woman. Her black hair was thickly streaked with grey, and though her face was strong and even handsome, as the faces of old women often are, it was marked with many lines which the passing years had left there. But the eyes of Salome were as bright as the eyes of a young woman, for she had a strong will and a high courage. Once, when her sons were babies, she had attacked a wild animal which had come toward her children as if to harm them. Where her love was concerned, Salome knew no fear. Some of the women who followed Jesus were so timid that they were almost afraid to speak to him until he spoke to them; but Salome was not like that. It was because she loved the Master that it never occurred to her to be afraid of him, as some of the others were who loved him just as much. Love expresses itself differently in different persons.

Salome and several of the other women had joined Jesus and the men disciples as they came down toward Jericho that spring, a little while before the annual feast of the Passover at Jerusalem.

It had been a little time since Salome had seen Jesus or her two sons; and it seemed to her now that Peter, whom Jesus had called "the foundation stone of his church," was becoming more important than her sons, James and John, in the little wandering community of disciples. And the heart of Salome was troubled. She liked Peter, she liked his honest face and his blunt ways, and she knew how much he had done to forward the religion of Jesus; and yet—Salome was a mother, and she was just a little jealous.

John had whispered to her several times that he was more dearly beloved by Jesus than any of the other disciples; but Jesus himself had never told Salome so. In-

deed, it seemed to be his purpose that all his friends should feel absolutely equal, and that no one of them should exalt himself above the others. He wanted them to love each other, and to forget themselves. Salome liked all the disciples, except perhaps Judas Iscariot, and she only disliked him because John said that he was not honest, that often, when he wanted something for himself, he took the coins from the moneybag which Jesus had given him to carry. Salome did not really care whether Judas took silver or not; but she cared very much when Peter seemed to be given the first place, which she thought belonged to her own big sons.

One day the Master had been telling his friends about the kingdom of heaven, where he and his disciples should sit on thrones and judge the tribes of Israel. When he had finished talking, Salome came up to him and asked if she could speak to him alone. Jesus was so great that he never tried to make himself seem distant or unapproachable, and he now went with Salome a little to one side, away from the others, that she might say to him whatever was in her mind.

Her two sons, James and John, seeing their mother and the Master together, came also and stood with them. And Salome fell down on her knees before Jesus, worshiping him, and asked if he would give her something which she much desired.

Jesus always loved to make others happy, but he was far too wise to promise anything beforehand, so he asked Salome:

“What wilt thou?”

And Salome said, pointing to James and John:

“Grant that these my two sons may sit, the one on thy right hand, and the other on thy left, in thy kingdom.”

Jesus looked at her for a moment in silence, then he answered:

“Ye know not what ye ask.”

Turning to the two young men, who stood eager and expectant before him, he asked them:

“Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptised with the baptism that I am baptised with?”

By the cup that he should drink of, Jesus probably meant the cup of sorrow, and by the baptism that he was baptised with—his own blood.

“We are able,” answered James and John, for they did not understand the tremendous claim they made.

“Ye shall drink indeed of my cup,” replied Jesus, “and be baptised with the baptism that I am baptised with: but to sit on my right hand, and on my left, is not mine to give, but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of my Father.”

Salome and her sons had not noticed, so intent were they on their question and its answer, that the ten other men had come up behind them and had heard all they had said. And Peter and Andrew and Philip and the others were filled with indignation at James and John. How dared they ask the Master to sit on his right and left hand in the kingdom of heaven? It seemed to them presumption, deserving some grave punishment. But Jesus smiled gently, that they might know he was not seriously displeased with these, his children, even when they were presumptuous; and calling all the disciples to him, he tried to make them understand a little better what it meant to be a disciple. He said:

“Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great, exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you:

but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant: even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many."

James and John would have felt ashamed if it had not been for the sweetness of Jesus, as he taught them a better way to be great than by exalting themselves. And they remembered that their Master, though he was the Messiah, had never demanded honours for himself. They had seen him perform the lowest services for those who were sick or afflicted; they had seen him eat with publicans and sinners, whom the self-righteous Pharisees would not even look at; they had seen him sleep at night with his beautiful and sacred head pillow'd in the dust of the road. And in one place some months before, when the people, aroused to enthusiasm by his miracles, had wanted to make him a king, he had passed quietly away from them and had gone back to the open fields and to his homelessness. And the truth came to James and John with unforgettable force, that it was better to serve mankind as Jesus served it, than to sit upon his right and left hand in the kingdom of heaven.

Their eyes filled with tears as they looked at their Master, and they wondered how it was that he could turn every unpleasant thing into something beautiful. For their fellow disciples, who had been angry with them a moment before, now looked at them with gentleness and brotherly love; and one of them, seeing the string of James's shoe unloosed, stooped down and tied it for him.

And Salome, the mother, began to wonder what she could do to help the others. And that night, when she served their simple wayside supper to the men, she gave the largest pieces of meat and the thickest slices of bread

to Judas and to Peter, giving to her own dear sons the fragments which were left. And when, turning from her service, she saw the large and loving eyes of Jesus fixed upon her face, she knew that he understood her; and she came to see that for a mother to exalt her sons at the expense of others, merely because they are hers and because she loves them, is but another and more subtle form of selfishness, for which there is no place in the kingdom of heaven.

CHAPTER XXV

TWO MEN OF JERICHO

Jesus came down toward Jericho on his last journey to Jerusalem. He had already told his twelve disciples that they were going to the Passover, in order that all the things written by the old prophets concerning the Son of man should be accomplished; that he should be delivered unto the chief priests and unto the scribes, who should condemn him to death, and should deliver him to the Gentiles, and that they should scourge him, and spit upon him, and kill him, and that on the third day he should rise again.

The disciples had not fully understood what he meant; but one of them, Judas Iscariot, had been much distressed by these words of the Master. Judas had himself been ill-treated in the past, before he knew Jesus, and the thought that he was going to have more trouble made him frown and mutter to himself. All the way up to Jericho he was silent and preoccupied. He wondered how the others could smile and talk as if nothing had happened. To him the prediction of Jesus that they were going to meet with persecution was a more important happening than the healing of the sick, the lame and the blind. Judas felt that he had had enough of trouble in the past. He wanted the kingdom of heaven to appear in the form of earthly glory, as so many others do at the present time.

The roads along which they travelled that day were no longer the blossoming lanes of Galilee, but the stony ways

to the north of Jerusalem—the road to Jericho. The city of Jericho itself was rather a pleasant place, with its gardens of spices; it was at the junction of several routes, and there were always strangers there. As the Master and his friends approached the city they were joined by many people. Some of them had seen Jesus before in other places, and really believed that he was the Messiah whom God had sent to save the Jews. Others, and by far the greater number, followed him out of curiosity. For the fame of Jesus had now spread all over Syria, and wherever he went he was followed by crowds. Some, who were weary of the world, wanted to hear about the kingdom of heaven; others wanted to be healed of their diseases; others, still, wanted the coppers which Judas carried in the moneybag and which the Master always shared with those who had no food.

It seemed to the disciples that the face of Jesus was very sad that day. He had been walking alone, before them, and he had walked with his head bent as if in troubled thought. For Jesus understood what the disciples did not seem to grasp, that the priests and Pharisees were already plotting his death. Yet, notwithstanding this knowledge, he intended to go down to Jerusalem for the feast of the Passover. He might have escaped his enemies by going back again into Galilee, but he would not go back; for it seemed to him that God had told him to go forward, that the prophesies must be fulfilled to the letter. The old prophets had declared, as Jesus had told his disciples, that the Messiah, when he came, should be betrayed by the Jews, and mocked, and scourged, and killed. It was strange that none of the disciples, except Judas, had seemed to understand. So Jesus walked sadly at the head of his little company of followers, as they came down to Jericho.

Sitting on the ground by the roadside, his back against a stone wall and his ragged garment trailing in the dust, was a blind man named Bartimæus, and he was begging of the passers-by. His unwashed hand, long, thin and clawlike, was extended; his sightless eyes were rolled upward in his head; and whenever he heard a step approaching, he began his shrill, quavering, monotonous appeal:

“Kind friend, a penny, only a penny, for I am blind.”

Bartimæus had been sitting there in one spot for a long time, ever since the early morning. Some hours before he had been cold, and his teeth had chattered as he reiterated his one cry, at the sound of every footstep: “Kind friend, a penny, only a penny, for I am blind.” But now the noonday sun shone warm against the wall, and blind Bartimæus no longer shivered. His voice had lost something of its quaver, though it was still shrill, as he repeated, over and over again, “Kind friend, a penny, only a penny, for I am blind.”

He was just beginning to wonder when the little son of a kind neighbour, who always led him to his place by the wall each morning and led him back to his wretched hovel at night, would come and bring him his noonday bite of bread and meat. Bartimæus was hungry, but the pennies in his pouch were few. He had heard many people pass that morning, he had reminded every passer-by that he was blind; but the heart of the world seemed hard that day, and each man kept his pennies for himself. Why did not the good little boy come to bring him his dinner? Had he forgotten him? But who should trouble himself to remember a blind beggar?

Bartimæus was not bitter, for he had a loving heart under his rags; and years ago, before he lost his sight, he had had a little son of his own whom he had worked for

with his hands. But the little son was dead, and every one else who had loved Bartimæus was dead; and as no one would give a blind man work to do, Bartimæus had finally laid aside his pride and sat down in the dust by the wayside to beg. Not every one who holds out an unwashed hand and asks the passers-by for pennies, has come to that sad state through laziness.

"If I could only see!" moaned Bartimæus to himself. "If I could only see the sun which now warms me with its heat! If I could see the face of the kind little boy who seems to have forgotten me this day! But perhaps he is playing somewhere with other children, bless his heart! And I am not yet so very hungry, after all."

In the distance Bartimæus heard the sound of many footsteps and the babble of many voices. What could it be, he wondered? Some passing caravan of traders, maybe, who would fill his hand with pennies, so that he could pay the mother of the little boy for the bread and meat, and for the bite of hot cake which she gave him every night. The noise of the approaching multitude drew nearer and nearer; but there were so many voices on the air that no one noticed the quavering tones of the blind beggar.

Suddenly he heard, through the sound of many footfalls, a light pattering step which he recognised. It was his friend, the little boy. He felt the child's soft hands upon his own, stretched out as usual for alms; but there was nothing in those hands. The boy had forgotten the bread and meat!

"What is it?" cried Bartimæus, clutching the child. "Who is passing? Tell me quick!"

"Jesus of Nazareth passeth by," said the sweet voice of the child. "My mother told me he was coming."

The heart of blind Bartimæus leaped beneath his

rags. He had heard of Jesus of Nazareth, and how he had raised the dead from their graves and had given sight to the blind. And in a loud voice he cried:

"Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy on me!"

"Be silent," cried the men who went before Jesus, "be silent, beggar, and do not trouble the Master."

But Bartimæus would not be silent. He cried again and again, each time louder than before:

"Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy on me! Son of David, have mercy on me!"

It seemed to Bartimæus at that moment that if Jesus of Nazareth could only hear his voice above the noise of the multitude, if he could only call loudly enough to make him hear, that the marvellous man of whom so many stories were told would restore the sight to his blinded eyes. His heart beat violently. There was a sound as of waters in his ears. His old clawlike hands clutched the hands of the little boy until the child winced. Jesus of Nazareth—who gave sight to the blind!

And Jesus, as he passed by, heard the voice of some one calling on him for mercy. And he forgot the trouble that was waiting for him in Jerusalem. How could he think of himself, when some one cried for mercy? There was in the voice he heard a tone of conviction, of faith. Surely the man who called like that believed on him.

Then the Master, coming nearer, saw the blind man by the wayside, his ragged garment trailing in the dust, his thin hands groping in the air, his sightless eyes wide open now in the sunshine. And a great pity filled the heart of Jesus. He wanted to do all the good he could in the little time that was left to him. He told one of the disciples to bring the blind man to him.

"Be of good comfort," said the disciple to Bartimæus, "he calleth thee."

Then those who watched saw a sight which they never forgot. They saw the face of a beggar, old, seamed with wrinkles and unclean, with sightless eyes, become suddenly beautiful. A flame blazed behind that wrinkled countenance—the flame of faith. Casting aside his tattered, dust-stained cloak, blind Bartimæus staggered to his feet, stretching out his hands, as if groping to find the way. The disciple would have led him to the Master; but the little boy, the beggar's friend, slipped quickly between them.

"I always lead Bartimæus," said the child, and it was he who led the blind beggar to Jesus.

"What wilt thou that I shall do unto thee?" asked Jesus, when Bartimæus stood before him.

"That I may receive my sight," the blind man answered, and his tones thrilled the heart of Jesus.

"*Receive thy sight!*" said the Master. The power in his voice was indescribable. It was a command, which no believing soul could resist. It reminded the disciples of that other time when he had said, "Lazarus, come forth."

And the spirit of the blind man, which came from God and which recognised the call of Jesus, even as Lazarus had recognised it—the spirit of the blind man stirred behind his eyes. Suddenly the darkness in which he had lived so long changed to a glimmering twilight, the blackness became greyness. Then the greyness was shot across with streaks of rosy-white, which changed and moved and circled before him. And in the moving brightness he saw a face. At first he thought it was the face of God; then, looking closer, he realised that it was the face of a man—a man who stood before him. Moving his eyes, he saw other faces and forms, and behind the forms were trees, and the sky—yes, and the brilliant sun!



Jesus Healing Blind Bartimæus

The blind man, unable to endure so much light after his long darkness, covered his eyes with his hands, crying:

"I see! I see!"

And Jesus said:

"Thy faith hath made thee whole."

Then the blind man, taking his hands away from his dazzled eyes, opened them again slowly, carefully, until he saw once more the face which he had seen first—the face of Jesus of Nazareth, which he had called to him out of the darkness wherein he dwelt. He was so absorbed in looking at that face that he forgot all else, until he heard a little wistful voice:

"Bartimæus, Bartimæus, will you not look at me?"

Turning toward the voice, he saw the face of a little boy, sweet and tender, with wide eyes raised to his. And Bartimæus wondered if he had died suddenly and gone to heaven; for the face of the little boy was like the face of his own child, dead twenty years before.

"Follow me," said the loving voice of Jesus, as he moved on toward the city of Jericho.

And Bartimæus, who had been blind so long and who now saw, took in his hand the hand of the little child, and the two walked slowly after Jesus. But every few steps the old man turned and looked down at the face of the boy. And whenever he looked down, he smiled.

How lovely the world was! The trees wore the tender green of spring, and many of them were in blossom. The sky was a pure blue, and here and there soft, fleecy clouds moved slowly across the heavens. It seemed to Bartimæus that the world was far more beautiful than when he was young. In those days he had taken the beauty of the world as a matter of course; but now, after his long blindness, it came to him as a revelation. He wondered that

he had never noticed in the old days how graceful were the branches of the palm-trees as they waved in the breeze.

In the city of Jericho, the news had gone forth that Jesus of Nazareth was coming, and there was great excitement among the people. Crowds filled the streets, all looking in the direction from which Jesus was said to be approaching. As men stood together, they told each other stories they had heard about this man, whom so many persons believed to be the Messiah the Jews were waiting for; how a blazing star had appeared in the East before his birth; how he had turned water into wine at the marriage in Cana of Galilee; how for the last two years he had been travelling around the country working miracles and healing the sick and afflicted. But, oftener than any other story, men told of how he had raised Lazarus from the dead, in Bethany near Jerusalem, only a little while before.

Among the men who lived in Jericho was a rich tax-collector, or publican, named Zacchæus. All the Jews of the city disliked him, as they always disliked those who gathered the taxes for the Romans. The word publican in Syria meant a tax-collector, and so unpopular were these officials, that the phrase "publicans and sinners" was in common use among the Pharisees and Sadducees. A self-respecting Jew would not eat in the house of a publican, and when he met one in the street, he would hardly speak to him.

Now this publican, Zacchæus, was a man of very short stature; and when he saw the crowd which came down the street before Jesus, and when he looked at the other crowds gathered along the way, he realised that he himself would not be able to see the Master at all, because he was so short. So he ran on ahead of the people, and climbed up

into a sycamore-tree, that he might look down and see Jesus when he passed by.

When Jesus came along the road, preceded and followed by a great multitude, some instinct made him lift his eyes to the sycamore-tree in which sat Zacchæus. The little man was curled up on one of the lower boughs, he was leaning forward, one hand was clutching a branch on either side of him, and his homely face was alight with interest. Surely, thought Jesus, this man must earnestly desire to see him! He remembered the enthusiasm of blind Bartimæus a little while before, the faith which had made him whole. Perhaps this man also had great faith.

Jesus knew how the Jews despised the publican, notwithstanding his riches; but the Master always judged people for what they really were in their hearts, not for what somebody else might think they were. And as he passed beneath the sycamore-tree into which the publican had climbed, Jesus called to him:

"Zacchæus, make haste, and come down; for to-day I must abide at thy house."

Zacchæus was so surprised that he nearly fell out of the tree. Would the Messiah of the Jews eat in the house of a publican who was hated by the Jews? But there was no time for him to consider the question, for the Master was there below, demanding hospitality. And Zacchæus clambered down out of the tree as fast as he could. He scratched his hands a little in his haste, but he was too excited to notice such a trifle as that, and in another moment he was out of the tree and on the ground.

Jesus looked down at the little man, standing there before him in the road. The homely face of Zacchæus looked almost handsome, as he expressed his joy that Jesus of Nazareth would eat with him. And the Master wondered how the Jews could despise this good man, even

though he was obliged to serve the Romans and to take their taxes. For Jesus felt the great loving heart which beat under the publican's coat.

When the Jews in the crowd saw Zacchæus walking beside Jesus, and when they saw that the Master was going to the publican's house, they were amazed. And they murmured among themselves:

"He is gone to be guest with a man that is a sinner!"

They forgot the things which Jesus had said on similar occasions: "I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners." And, "They that be whole, need not a physician." And, "What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety-and-nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it? And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders rejoicing." For Jesus meant by all these sayings that it was the very sinners whom the Pharisees despised, that he specially loved to bring to the knowledge of the kingdom of heaven. He ate with publicans and gathered sinners about him that he might make them good. And so the Pharisees, who did not care to make other people good, but only wanted to *seem* good themselves, were shocked.

Zacchæus was so delighted at the idea of entertaining the Master at his house, that he called all his servants together and gave orders that a great feast should be prepared, not only for Jesus and his disciples and friends, but for everybody else in the crowd of his followers who was hungry. And the crowd, as we know, included Bartimæus who had been the blind beggar, but who now saw more clearly than others who had not been blind.

So Bartimæus did not need, after all, the bread and meat which the little boy had forgotten to bring to him for his dinner. For both he and the child could eat at

the house of the rich Zacchæus, who loved all the world that day because he loved the Master. And you will always find that that is one of the surest proofs of loving Jesus.

When the feast was begun, and Zacchæus the publican sat at his own table with Jesus beside him, and the disciples and friends were all around, he was so happy that he wanted to make a public demonstration of his faith in the Master and in the truths which he taught. And the little man stood up before them all, and said:

“Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I will give to the poor; and if I have taken anything from any man by false accusation, I will restore him fourfold.”

The heart of Jesus was touched by this declaration of Zacchæus, and he said to his disciples and friends, and to all the others who listened:

“This day is salvation come to this house, forasmuch as he also is a son of Abraham. For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.”

The disciples greeted Zacchæus as a brother and as a true follower of Jesus. And Bartimæus, who had been blind, watched the company from the doorway; for the room in which Jesus sat was not large enough to hold every one, and some of them had to eat outside. And Bartimæus rejoiced, because the rich Zacchæus, whose voice he well knew, though of course he had not seen him before, had never passed the wall where he sat and begged, without putting money into his outstretched hand. Now that Bartimæus could see, perhaps Zacchæus would give him work to do and pay him wages, so that he need no longer be a beggar by the wayside.

As we know, Jesus was fond of teaching by parables, that is, by telling stories with a hidden moral. And that day at the feast given by Zacchæus he told the parable of

the talents. They were coming toward Jerusalem now, and Jesus knew that his work—and his life—were nearing an end. He wanted to impress upon his friends that, when he was gone, they should each make good use of the treasure of faith and love which he had given them. He wanted them to increase their faith by use, and not hide it away. He wanted them to feel, when he was gone, that he was not gone forever; but that he should return and demand of them an accounting of their services for him and for God. So he told them the parable of the talents, and there was a hidden meaning in every word of it.

Jesus said:

“For the kingdom of heaven is as a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods.

“And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability; and straightway took his journey.

“Then he that had received the five talents went and traded with the same, and made them other five talents. And likewise he that had received two, he also gained other two. But he that had received one, went and digged in the earth, and hid his lord’s money.

“After a long time, the Lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them.

“And so he that had received five talents came and brought other five talents, saying, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me five talents: behold, I have gained beside them five talents more.

“His Lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.

“He also that had received two talents came and said,

Lord, thou deliveredst unto me two talents: behold, I have gained two other talents beside them.

“His Lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.

“Then he which had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed: And I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth: lo, there thou hast that is thine.

“His Lord answered and said unto him, Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strawed. Thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with usury.

“Take therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him which hath ten talents. For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not, shall be taken away even that which he hath.

“And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

Each man who listened with understanding to the parable of the talents, took the meaning home to himself. Zacchæus the publican, who was rich, understood it to mean that he must give an accounting to God for the use which he made of his wealth.

To Bartimæus, who had been blind, it meant that he must make good use of the sight which Jesus had brought back to his eyes.

And the twelve disciples, those who were nearest to the Master, understood by this parable that they must

spread the knowledge of Christ and of the kingdom of heaven; that they must teach to others every beautiful thing which Jesus had taught to them; that they must double the knowledge of God and His love in the world, as the talents given to the faithful servants had been doubled in their master's absence.

So great was the charm of Jesus as he told the story, that every man present desired, above all other things, to prove himself a faithful servant—even Judas Iscariot.

The dinner was now ended. The Master rising from the table and calling his disciples, prepared to go on toward Jerusalem.

To the two men of Jericho, Zacchæus and Bartimæus, the passing of Jesus through their city had been the beginning of a new life. And to-day we should probably never think of the little Jewish town of Jericho, had it not been for the eager and peculiar response of those two men to the summons: “Jesus of Nazareth passeth by.”

CHAPTER XXVI

THE ALABASTER BOX

It was six days before the feast of the Passover, when Jesus and his disciples and friends came up to Jerusalem for the last time. But they did not go at once into the great and unsympathetic city, where the priests and Pharisees were even then stirring up anger against the Master. They stopped first at the pretty little village of Bethany, the home of Martha and Mary and Lazarus, where Jesus some weeks before had raised his friend from the tomb.

Bethany was only a short walk from Jerusalem. It was on the summit of a hill, the slopes of which were covered with olive-trees, and fig-trees, and palm-trees. Jesus had always loved it, since first he found there the delightful home of Lazarus and his sisters. And now especially, as he and his friends drew slowly and somewhat wearily toward Jerusalem, the tranquil slopes of the green hill looking toward Bethany seemed the way to a haven of peace. Though it was so near to Jerusalem, the centre of strife and discord, Jesus knew that at Bethany he would find only harmony and love. And so he went there.

The family at Bethany had been expecting him for several days. Lazarus, even more than the others, was anxious to see Jesus. Since he had been brought back from the tomb into the light of the sun, many things had happened to trouble the brother of Martha and Mary. He

had become altogether too famous for his peace of mind. Whenever he descended the quiet hill, covered with olives and figs and palms, and went into the busy city of Jerusalem, he was beset by all sorts of people who asked him questions about the life beyond the tomb. Had he seen God? Had he talked with Elias? Had he been asleep in the bosom of Abraham when Jesus called him back to earth? Lazarus did not know how to answer these questions. He did not think it was right to answer them at all. He was not certain that Jesus would wish him to answer them. And yet, some of those who questioned him seemed honest in their desire for knowledge of that unknown world where he had been.

But there were others whose questions did not seem to be honest. These were the Pharisees, those rigid followers of the letter of the Jewish law who cared not for the spirit. Some of their queries filled Lazarus with uneasiness of soul. Had he seen Satan, the prince of devils? Was it not by the help of Satan that Jesus had called him back from the grave? When the Pharisees, with sidelong glances, asked these questions, Lazarus would usually turn and walk away. In the beginning he had answered simply, "No," but as the Pharisees troubled him more and more, he tried to avoid them. If Jesus would only come back to Bethany and tell him what to say when people talked to him like that!

But there were other happenings which troubled Lazarus even more than the questions of the Pharisees. Sometimes, when he walked alone upon the hill below Bethany, he would see a suspicious-looking person following him. Once, in the dark, an unknown man had nearly pushed him off a precipice; and several times he had been accosted by insolent strangers who tried to involve him in a quarrel.

What was the matter with all these people? Lazarus wondered. Did they desire to kill him, to get him out of the way? Were they trying to worry him until he should become insane? In Syria at that time insane men were believed to be possessed by devils. Lazarus knew that if he should become insane from the persecutions of these unknown persons, the enemies of Jesus would say that he and Jesus both were possessed by devils. He only now began to understand how strong, and how unscrupulous, were the Master's enemies in Jerusalem. Lazarus almost wished that Jesus had left him in the grave.

He did not tell his sisters about the troubles he was having, for he did not wish to worry them. But as the time for the feast of the Passover drew near, Mary and Martha seemed almost as anxious as Lazarus that Jesus should come. They used to go out of the house a dozen times a day and look down the road, to see if their great friend was coming. They, too, were sometimes troubled by neighbours, as well as strangers, who asked them questions about their brother.

So, on the afternoon when they went out as usual to look for Jesus, and really saw him coming along the road, they shouted with joy. Then the three ran down the road together to meet the Master. As he greeted them, they saw a look on his face which they had never seen there before—a look of unutterable sadness. They had seen him weep when he stood before the grave of Lazarus, but he had not looked like this. Had some trouble come to him? they wondered. The disciples also seemed burdened with anxiety.

Martha and Mary and Lazarus lived in the house of an old relative of theirs named Simon. Simon had been a leper before he knew Jesus, that is, he had had a very

loathsome disease which had made people afraid to come near him; but no one was afraid of him any more.

When Simon and Martha saw that Jesus was sad, they determined to cheer him with a pleasant supper. And to this supper they invited not only his disciples and friends, but many of their neighbours, and a few persons from Jerusalem who had met the Master on the way and had followed him to Bethany. The family at Bethany were just a little proud of their friendship with so great a man as Jesus. There is often that little touch of pride in even the purest love.

Most of the labour of preparing the supper fell, as usual, on the broad shoulders of Martha; for Mary wanted to sit at the feet of Jesus and to hear him talk. She wanted also to talk to that other Mary, who was called Mary Magdalene because she came from the village of Magdala. She, with several of the other women who were friends of Jesus, had come up with him to Jerusalem for the feast of the Passover. The house at Bethany was very full that afternoon.

It was a large company that sat down to supper, and the faithful Martha served them. At the table, besides Jesus and his friends and disciples and the invited guests, were Lazarus and Simon, the master of the house.

Even at the table, it was plain to those who loved Jesus that he was very sad. He talked, as usual; he even smiled. But when he told a lovely story about the kingdom of heaven, it seemed to the two Marys who watched him that he was wishing he might be there himself, and away from the sadness of the world. They wondered what hidden sorrow had come to him. They did not know that the priests and Pharisees were at that very moment plotting to kill him—but Jesus knew.

Lazarus was so happy to see Jesus that he did not

even notice the sadness of the Master. He sat near him at the table, and could hardly take his eyes from the face he loved so much. He was glad now that Jesus had brought him back to life, even though the Pharisees and their hired servants had lately made that life a burden to him by their persecutions. He had been afraid; but who could be afraid when Jesus was with him? He did not know—poor Lazarus!—that those who desire to do evil will do it, in spite of God and all His angels.

Lazarus was too much absorbed in the Master to notice with what strange eyes all the neighbours present were looking at himself. “The man who had been dead and buried for four days! And here he was, eating and drinking, as if nothing had happened to him. Why, his cheeks were even red!” So thought these good friends and neighbours of Lazarus, and they were so excited that they could hardly eat Martha’s good supper.

But, though they stared at Lazarus, they stared still harder at Jesus. A man who could say to the dead, “Arise,” and they arose! It is difficult for us, in our cold and skeptical age, even to imagine the feelings of these people about the Master. Among the nations of the East there is more faith and more enthusiasm. That is why all the great religions of the earth have come from Asia. The men and women who were gathered there at the house of Simon the leper were not afraid or ashamed to show their feelings.

Among those who were happiest to be with Jesus that evening was Mary Magdalene, the beautiful woman who had been possessed by seven devils, but whom the Master had saved and made good again. She could never do enough for Jesus, either in love or service. Had he told her to lie down and die, she would have done it gladly. She would have done anything for him gladly—except to

go away from him. The Catholic Church has enrolled the name of this woman among the great saints, because she loved Jesus so much.

As Mary Magdalene watched the Master at table and realised that he was sad, she was filled with a great desire to do something to make him happy. But what could she do? He seemed to want nothing for himself except love, and that all these people gave him in abundance. But Mary knew that Jesus enjoyed perfumes, as all Orientals do. And you must never forget in reading and thinking about Jesus that he was an Oriental—that is, a dweller in the East. You will never understand him if you judge him by the standards of the colder West. His heart was on fire with love for all the world, and that is why the world has worshipped him for nineteen hundred years. The most loving and affectionate person you ever knew would seem cold-hearted if compared with Jesus. It takes a great love for the world to win an answering love from the world for nineteen hundred years.

Mary Magdalene remembered that Jesus enjoyed perfumes. Perhaps the subtle influence of sweet odours would make him forget his sadness. Now Mary was not a poor woman, as were so many of the followers of Jesus. She had beautiful jewels and much gold, and among her possessions was an alabaster box filled with the very precious ointment of spikenard, a sweet and lasting perfume. Desiring to make Jesus happy, as well as to do him some special honour before all these strangers, Mary brought the alabaster box into the room where Jesus sat at supper. Then she went and stood behind the Master, and breaking the alabaster box, she poured all the precious ointment upon his head.

Immediately the whole room was filled with a delightful fragrance. It seemed as if the winds from far-

away had blown across the flower-gardens of the world, bringing their entrancing odours into this room.

And Jesus smiled. He who loved humanity so much was always touched by the evidence of love in others, and he read the purpose in Mary's heart. He knew that she had brought the sweetest and most precious thing she had, to make him forget his sadness. Even a little of this ointment would have perfumed the room, but she had lavished the whole upon his head. It was the way of those who loved Jesus to give *all* to him, and not a little, because he had given himself utterly to them and to the world.

Then Mary, wishing to do even more for Jesus, took some of the ointment in her hands, and kneeling beside the Master, she anointed his feet with the ointment, and wiped them with her long and beautiful hair. In those days men took off their shoes before they sat at table, and the feet of Jesus were bare. And as Mary, kneeling there beside him, gently wiped his anointed feet with her long hair, the tears streamed from her eyes. For she had been a great sinner before the Master taught her a purer way of living, and her repentance was deep and never-ending. Each day she repented anew, and always with tears. The world remembers Mary Magdalene as the woman who weeps eternally for her sins, and in many Roman Catholic churches there are altars erected to her, where repentant women go to weep and to ask God to forgive them for her sake.

As she knelt there at the feet of Jesus, wiping them with her hair, it seemed to him that the fragrance of the ointment of spikenard was the perfume of her love for him and for God.

But Judas Iscariot, the disciple who was already unfaithful to Jesus in his heart, could not see the beauty

in Mary's action. He thought only of the money value of the ointment. In the beginning of Judas's discipleship, Jesus, knowing that he was not quite honest, had given him their common purse to carry, as a proof of his trust. But Judas had come to value more the purse and its contents than he valued the delicate proof of confidence in him which Jesus had made. And now, when he saw Mary lavishing this precious perfume for love's sake, he was angry. And he cried, before all the assembled company:

"Why was not this ointment sold for much money, and given to the poor?" And he murmured against Mary.

Strange to say, Judas, who now assumed to take such an interest in the poor, was among all the disciples the one who really cared least for them. He had even objected, on certain occasions in the past, to opening the purse which he carried, when he was asked to distribute alms to those who were in need.

The Master looked at Judas, who sat there at the table with an angry frown on his dark face. The glance of Jesus was gentle, even pitiful; for he understood the faults of Judas better than any of the others understood them—better even than John, who disliked him. For Jesus was one of those rare beings who can love those who are not lovable. He could see the reflection of God's face even in a broken and distorting mirror.

And he now said to Judas:

"Let her alone; why trouble ye her? She hath wrought a good work upon me." By this he probably meant that the sweet odour of the ointment, with the sight of Mary's devotion as she knelt beside him wiping his feet with her long hair, had lightened the trouble which had weighed upon his spirit. And he said:

"For ye have the poor with you always, and whenever ye will ye may do them good; but me ye have not always.

"She hath done what she could: she is come aforetime to anoint my body to the burying." For ever in the thought of Jesus now was the knowledge that he was soon to die.

He looked from the disciples to Mary, still kneeling there at his feet, and a deep feeling for her devotion surged up in his tender heart. He realised that the ages to come would understand her and love her, for all that she had suffered through repentance and through love for her master. And he said to his disciples:

"Verily I say unto you, Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, this also that she hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her."

And Judas was ashamed, though he was still angry. In some selfish and bitter hearts, to be made ashamed is to be made treacherous, and it was so with Judas. For the first time since he had walked with Jesus, he felt resentment against him. Sometimes in the past the Master had reproved him, but never publicly like this; for never before had Judas so far lost his self-control.

He arose and stalked out of the room. As he passed the seat of Jesus, he bruised his naked foot on a fragment of the broken alabaster box which was lying on the floor.

Mary still knelt at the feet of the Master, wiping them with her long hair. And the fragrance of the spikenard filled the room, bringing to the hearts of all present a keener realisation of their love for Jesus.

CHAPTER XXVII

THE TRIUMPHAL ENTRY INTO JERUSALEM

The next morning after the supper at Bethany, Jesus told his disciples that the time was come for them to enter Jerusalem, that the Son of man might be glorified. Of course they had been often before in the Holy City, but every one felt that this time was different. On that Sunday morning of spring the heart of every man beat high with excitement. They all thought that something of tremendous importance was about to happen. Jesus knew what was coming, but his disciples did not. To them, it seemed that the kingdom of heaven was immediately to appear. Knowing that Jesus was the Son of God, they believed that he had only to declare himself with special power, and that the whole world would be forced to acknowledge him.

Even Judas, who had been angry the night before when Jesus had reproved him for his harshness to Mary Magdalene, after she broke the alabaster box of precious ointment to anoint the head and feet of Jesus, even Judas was full of enthusiasm this morning. At last, he thought, the Master was going to declare himself, and make everybody fall at his feet. He forgot, for the moment, all that Jesus had said about the enmity of the priests and Pharisees. Judas had wondered a long time what Jesus was waiting for. He still believed in the Master, and, in his sullen and selfish way, he loved him. He even forgot his anger of the night before in the ex-

ciment of preparation for the short journey to Jerusalem.

They started. With Jesus were his twelve disciples, his friends from Bethany, and many others. It was a large company which came down the hill, with the Master walking at their head. When they were near to the village of Bethphage, at the Mount of Olives, Jesus stopped. He stood still a moment, thinking. Then he said to two of his disciples:

“Go into the village over against you, and straightway ye shall find an ass tied, and a colt with her: loose them, and bring them unto me.

“And if any man say aught unto you, ye shall say, The Lord hath need of them; and straightway he will send them.”

The men went away, as Jesus had told them. But they did not know of what he had been thinking, when he stopped suddenly a moment before. For he had remembered a verse from the ancient prophesies relating to the Messiah, which said: “Tell ye the daughter of Sion, Behold, the King cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass.” It had seemed to Jesus that this sudden memory was a command from God to fulfil the prophesies, in order that men afterward might believe.

The two disciples went into the village of Bethphage. And there they found, at a place where two roads met, a mother donkey with a young colt—just as the Master had said they would. And they loosed them, and started to come away.

Then certain men who stood near asked them what they were doing, and why they were taking the donkey and the colt.

The men answered, as Jesus had commanded: “The

Lord hath need of them.’’ And the men made no further objection.

Jesus, as he stood there, saw them coming: the two men, the long-eared donkey with the soft and gentle eyes, and running beside her the little colt, so young that it was still rather unsteady on its thin legs.

Some of the disciples laid their cloaks across the donkey, to make a seat of honour for the Master, and Jesus sat upon the donkey’s back. And as he started slowly, the little colt following close behind, other disciples spread their cloaks before him in the way, so that he might ride into the city on a carpet made of the garments of his followers.

And others of the men ran on before, and cut down branches of the palm-trees, spreading them also in his path, that the feet of his donkey might tread on greenness. It was a beautiful sight, a sight which had never before been seen in the neighbourhood of Jerusalem. It was a spontaneous demonstration of love and enthusiasm, and as the disciples waved palm branches before their Master, they cried with joyous voices:

‘‘Hosanna to the son of David: Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest.’’

As they came a little nearer to the city, they were met by other men they knew, Galileans from the north, from Capernaum, and the other cities by the lake, men who had loved Jesus for a long time, and who had come down to Jerusalem this week for the feast of the Passover. They had heard the night before that Jesus was in Bethany, and had come out to meet him, also waving green branches and crying:

‘‘Hosanna to the son of David: Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest.’’

And as those who were with Jesus saw these others

coming, and heard their welcoming voices, they cried themselves with redoubled fervour, so that from before him and behind him, and from every side, came a chorus of glad voices, all saying:

"Hosanna to the son of David: Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest."

And Jesus forgot the sadness which had oppressed him the night before, and for many days before that. He felt as if he were really coming into the kingdom of God, with all his loved ones with him. He now thought of Jerusalem as the Holy City—not as the stronghold of priests and Pharisees. At that moment it was to him the Jerusalem of the prophets, the city that all hearts yearned toward, Jerusalem the golden.

But going a little farther on, still with his friends before and behind him crying Hosannas, Jesus turned a bend of the road and came out upon the side of the Mount of Olives. Here he saw spread out before him the city of Jerusalem itself, the city of houses and of the great Temple, with its splendid sweep of terraces and its glittering metal-covered roof. This was the *real* Jerusalem of the priests and Pharisees, of wrangling scribes and self-righteous doctors, the Jerusalem which cared only for the letter of the Jewish law, and cared nothing for the love which Jesus brought it. The Jerusalem of his dreams was not this material city, but a city builded in the heart—the *new* Jerusalem.

He remembered how as a boy he had come here with his parents, making the long journey from Galilee on foot, one of a happy company of fellow-pilgrims, neighbours and friends, camping at night by the wayside. He remembered how wonderful the Temple had seemed to him then, at the age of twelve; how, on entering the sanctuary, he had thought that he was going into God's own

house. Alas! he had since learned that those who acted as the guardians of the house of God had never heard the voice which issued from between the cherubim in the Holy of Holies.

And now, as he rested there upon the Mount of Olives, and looked down at the cold and glittering Temple, he wept over it, and the words which he was to utter at another time were in his heart:

“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not.”

And still weeping, Jesus said to the city below him:

“If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes.

“For the days shall come unto thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, and shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation.”

Many years were to pass before this prophesy was verified; but it *was* verified. For in the time to come the enemies of the Jews did all that Jesus said.

Having wept over the city, Jesus moved toward it, with his disciples before and behind him rejoicing and praising God with a loud voice for all the mighty works which they had seen, and saying:

“Blessed be the King that cometh in the name of the Lord; peace in heaven, and glory in the highest.”

And now, as they drew nearer to Jerusalem, many Pharisees joined the multitude, and these were angry to

see the palm branches strewn before Jesus, as if he were a king, and to hear the joyful shouts of his friends proclaiming him as the Messiah. And the Pharisees pushed their way through the crowd until they came to the place where Jesus rode slowly on the donkey, with the tender little colt beside him. And they said angrily to Jesus:

“Rebuke thy disciples.”

But Jesus, knowing that the time was come for him to declare himself in the unbelieving city, answered the Pharisees:

“I tell you that, if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out.”

The Pharisees were nearly distracted. They said to one another:

“Perceive ye how ye prevail nothing? behold, the world is gone after him!”

And it seemed, as Jesus came into the city of Jerusalem, that the world had indeed gone after him, as the Pharisees said; for the fame of his miracle in raising Lazarus from the dead had grown until every man and woman in the city desired to see the Nazarene who could work such wonders. Even those who were not willing to commit themselves by strewing palm branches in his way, wanted at least to look upon him. And besides the friends and Galileans who had come with him along the Mount of Olives road, there were other Galileans and friends who met him at the entrance of the city, so that his progress toward the Temple was the progress of a conqueror.

And the chief priests and Pharisees, looking on at his triumph, wagged their old bearded heads, as much as to say:

“Shout, fools, and strew palm branches! But no man who says that he is the Messiah of the Jews shall

live in our day. No man shall live who would destroy our power, and place himself in the seat of Moses."

And still the joyous disciples went on crying:

"Hosanna: Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord: Hosanna in the highest."

Men who had never seen Jesus before, as they saw and heard this strange procession, asked excitedly: "Who is this?"

And from every side came the answer:

"This is Jesus, the prophet of Nazareth in Galilee."

And the Pharisees could find no one to listen to them that day, when they tried to expound the letter of the Jewish law, saying the same old things which had been uttered from generation to generation, and which had lost their meaning from overuse. And with every moment, as the crowd round Jesus grew larger, the Pharisees and priests became angrier and more troubled. And several of them now found courage to repeat what Caiaphas alone had said a short time before:

"It is expedient for us that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not."

And they further reasoned as to how they could put Lazarus out of the way; for it seemed to them that his being with Jesus that day increased the crowd round the Master from Galilee. And there were also with Jesus those men from Bethany and Jerusalem who had witnessed the raising of Lazarus, the men who had stood by the open door of the tomb, who had heard the Master call with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come forth!" and who had seen the dead man walk out of the tomb into the sunlight, with the look of bewilderment on his face. These men were loud in their assertions of the truth of the miracle which they had witnessed.

Jesus came up to the great Temple, which crowned

the city of Jerusalem. He saw the porches, with their rows of pillars and marble pavements, familiar to him since boyhood. He went through the court of the Gentiles, beyond which only Jews could pass. He saw again the great bronze gates, so heavy that it took twenty porters to open and close them.

In this Temple was the Holy Place, where stood the altar of incense, the tables of shewbread and the golden candlesticks. You have read in a former story that in the innermost part of the Temple was the Holy of Holies, which was entered only once a year, where stood the Ark of the Covenant, the most sacred of all things to the Jews. You remember that this Ark was a chest of acacia wood, covered with gold, and that over the lid of the chest, which was called "the mercy seat," two angels extended their wings; that in the Ark were kept the two tablets of stone on which were written the Ten Commandments which God had delivered to Moses on Mount Sinai. Between the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies there was a veil, called the Veil of the Temple, too sacred for any one to touch except the High Priest. You must remember this veil because, during the week which was to follow, something very remarkable was to happen to it, something which should be told for generation after generation until the end of the world.

As Jesus stood there in the Temple, again he heard, as in boyhood, the musicians singing the Psalms which predict the coming of the Messiah:

"Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee."

"Ask of me, and I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession."

"I will make thy name to be remembered in all generations; therefore shall the people praise thee for ever and ever."

“Princes shall come out of Egypt; Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands unto God.

“I will praise the name of God with a song, and will magnify him with thanksgiving.

“He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass: as showers that water the earth.

“His name shall endure forever: his name shall be continued as long as the sun: and men shall be blessed in him; all nations shall call him blessed.

“The voice of rejoicing and salvation is in the tabernacle of the righteous.

“The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner.”

Can we understand the feelings of Jesus as he stood there in the great Temple at Jerusalem, listening to the singing of the Psalms which predicted his own coming, he knowing at the same time that the High Priest, who alone was considered holy enough to touch the Veil of the Temple, was planning his death? Of all the dramatic stories of the world, and they are many, there is none so dramatic as this; there is no other story in which the essential elements of tragedy are so blended with the elements of pure beauty. There is no other story wherein the hatred which is death, and the love which is life, stand so close together.

Those solemn priests of the Temple, who claimed to be near to God, were planning to kill Jesus; and he, who loved all the world more intensely than a mother loves her children, stood there in the Temple and listened to the singing of the Psalms which predicted the coming of the One whom the Temple itself would destroy.

And the disciples of Jesus? The Master had said that the time was come when the Son of man should be

glorified, and his friends were expecting a sign to appear in the heavens—a physical sign, which should announce that the old law was passed away, and that the kingdom of God was to begin. All the time they were in the Temple enclosure with Jesus they were looking for this sign. Would it be a blazing light in the heavens, a star in the daytime, a standing still of the sun? We must remember that in those days the science of astronomy was not known as it is now, and we must also remember that the disciples of Jesus were simple men, with much faith and love, but little book learning. And though they had been with the Master nearly all the time for two or three years, they had not grasped the simple fact—so clear to Jesus—that the kingdom of heaven was to be found in the *hearts* of men, and not in the courts of the great Temple.

As the hours went by that first day at Jerusalem, and nothing happened except the healing of a few sick persons, which they saw almost every day, the disciples began to wonder. Was not the Son of man to be glorified, after all? They had seen Jesus perform so many miracles! They felt that the glorification of the Son of man must be something different to anything they had known before—something more extraordinary than the raising of a dead man or the turning of water into wine.

Even the three men who had seen Jesus transfigured on the mountain, where there was no one but themselves to behold the sight, wanted something like that to happen in this unbelieving and cynical Jerusalem. They were hurt at being called “foolish Galileans” by the haughty Pharisees and scribes. In Jerusalem the visitors from Galilee were held in rather low esteem. They did not speak their language exactly as it was spoken in Judæa, for the Galileans had a characteristic dialect, cer-

tain peculiarities of which may be likened to the dropping of the *h* among the lower classes in London. Even their enthusiasm in regard to the Temple was laughed at by those who lived always in the Holy City.

Now, they thought, if Jesus would only perform some great miracle, right there in the Temple, the haughty dwellers in Jerusalem would be obliged to take back the sneering things which they had said. The disciples remembered that, on a former visit to the Holy City, Jesus had declared: "Destroy this temple, and I will rebuild it in three days." They did not know that he referred to the temple of his own body; that he meant that when his body should be destroyed, he would arise from the dead in three days. No, they were inclined to take all the beautiful and figurative sayings of Jesus in a literal sense. Jesus was a great poet, as well as a great prophet; but there are always many persons, even true-hearted ones, who do not understand poetry. Some of the most beautiful poetry is not written in rhyme, and there is no greater poetry in the world than many of the sayings of Jesus. Every real poet knows this.

As the evening shadows drew down, the crowd around the Temple grew smaller; in little groups, and one by one, the people slipped away. And Jesus said to his disciples that they would return to Bethany. He started, and the disciples followed him in silence. After all the triumph of his entry into the city, they thought, after the palm branches strewed in his path, and the shouts of his followers, "Hosanna in the highest," he was going back to Bethany without being glorified! Perhaps it would happen on the morrow; perhaps he had some reason for waiting; perhaps it would be better for him to be glorified on the morrow, one day nearer to the great feast of the Passover. So they told themselves and each other.

We should not be too much surprised because the disciples of Jesus often misunderstood him. Jesus has been misunderstood by many noble souls for nearly two thousand years. In the Middle Ages, and even in later times, men have been tortured and burned at the stake by other men who believed themselves to be followers of the Master. It is hard for smaller men to understand a man so great as Jesus. His sympathy was so deep that he even found excuses for sinners; that is, he always tried to understand *why* people did wrong, in order that he might understand *them*, and know how to show them a better way. It is always easier for us to blame others than it is to understand them. Jesus even loved Judas, and numbered him among his twelve disciples; though he must have known that Judas would betray him.

And as they walked slowly back to Bethany that evening, after the day in Jerusalem, Jesus must have known what was passing in the mind of Judas, how Judas was thinking that if his Master was not going to be glorified, in the brilliant way he had supposed, he might not really *be* the Messiah, after all. For that thought was now in the mind of the unhappy man from Kerioth.

Back to Bethany! How the beautiful, peaceful place appealed to Jesus, after the noise and dust and wrangling of Jerusalem! Here was the quiet home of Mary and Martha, where there were no disputes. Here he could be himself, the gentle leader of friends who loved him, as he had been during those happy months when he had walked the blossoming ways of Galilee. The sternness which he was obliged to use with the hypocritical scribes and Pharisees of Jerusalem was not natural to Jesus. Wrangling and argument were not natural to him. He wanted to teach by love. Jesus never disputed about God. He only asked his friends to love him and to believe in God.

We can see the smile which lighted his face as he caught sight of the house at Bethany through the green trees. To-morrow he would have to go back to Jerusalem; but to-night he could be with those who loved him. He did not talk much that evening, but sat in silence with his dear ones, smiling at them now and then, or laying his hand upon the head of the gentle Mary as she sat at his feet. And then he went to rest.



CHAPTER XXVIII

THE CLEANSING OF THE TEMPLE

Monday morning, on the way back to Jerusalem, Jesus did something which astonished his disciples. In the past they had seen him bring dead things to life, but this was the first time they had ever seen him destroy anything.

As they walked toward the city, it was still early in the morning, and Jesus was hungry. Seeing a fig-tree in the distance bearing leaves, he went toward it, hoping to find fruit; but when he came to the tree he found nothing but leaves. Jesus wished to give his disciples a lesson in the power of will, in the power of belief in one's own ability to do the seemingly impossible, and he said to the fig-tree:

“Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward forever.”

That evening, when they passed the fig-tree again on their return to Bethany, the disciples could hardly believe their eyes; for the tree, which had been green and covered with leaves in the morning, was now yellow and shrivelled, as if a scorching fire had touched it. And they expressed their amazement to Jesus, saying:

“How soon is the fig-tree withered away!”

And Jesus answered them, with the look of power still on his face, the look with which he had withered the unfruitful tree:

“Have faith in God.

“For verily I say unto you, That whosoever shall say

unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith.

“Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them.”

Then the expression of his face softened, and a tender light came into his eyes, as he continued:

“And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have aught against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses.

“But if ye do not forgive, neither will your father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses.”

Jesus meant by these words that in order to command the powers of Nature, by the strength of one's belief in God and in oneself, as he had commanded those powers in withering the fig-tree, it was necessary to put away all *personal* feeling, all resentment against others. For personal resentment is weakness, and only the strong, who are above personal weakness and resentment, can command the powers of Nature.

Now Jesus, in starting for Jerusalem that morning, had determined to do a very important thing when he should reach the Temple, a thing requiring great strength of his will against the wills of a large number of other persons. And perhaps his action in withering the barren fig-tree, besides being a lesson for the disciples, was also an exercise to strengthen and steady his own will.

For Jesus was determined to cleanse the Temple at Jerusalem from some of the impure and wicked things which he had seen there the day before.

The Jews were always talking about purity. According to the old law of Moses, a man who had touched any

dead animal or bird whose flesh he was not allowed to eat—such as a camel, a pig, a cat, an eagle, an owl, a swan, a mouse—should be considered unclean until the evening, and could not come into the sanctuary. And should any of those dead animals or fowls fall into an earthen dish, the dish must be immediately broken. And if the dead body of any of those animals or birds should touch an oven, or a range for holding pots, it also should be immediately broken. And, according to the law of Moses, no man should ever eat without washing his hands, no matter where he was or how hungry he was, or whether there was any water near.

Now these laws, which were only a few among a great many laws of the Jews regarding purity, were all good in themselves; but the Jews carried the observance of them to an extreme of fussiness which often seemed foolish to Jesus. One day when the Master had eaten something without washing his hands, and the Pharisees had reproved him, Jesus had answered that it was not that which went into a man's mouth which made him unclean; but that which came out of it—meaning the words which the man spoke.

At another time the Pharisees had complained of Jesus for curing a sick man on the Sabbath. Because the law of Moses said that a man must not work on the Sabbath, the Pharisees seemed to think that one should not do even a kind action on that day. I have told you how these men cared only for the letter of the law, and cared nothing for its spirit. If a man obeyed the rules laid down by Moses, even though he might have hatred in his heart and all uncharitableness, still he could enter the sanctuary. One reason why the Pharisees hated Jesus and wanted to kill him, was because he thought that the love and goodness in a man's heart were more important in

the sight of God than any external thing. Jesus liked people to be clean, as we all do; but he also liked them to be kind at the same time, and that was something which did not interest the Pharisees.

Now when Jesus came to Jerusalem this last time, he saw many things in and around the Temple which he did not like. If you have read the Old Testament, you know that the Jews made bloody sacrifices to God; that they believed that by killing lambs and bullocks, and by smearing their blood upon the altars in a certain way, a man could please God. The old Mosaic law said, for example, that if a man had committed a sin through ignorance, he should bring a young bullock unto the tabernacle of the Lord for a sin offering, and the following were some of the bloody things which he should do:

“He shall bring the bullock unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation before the Lord; and shall lay his hand upon the bullock’s head, and kill the bullock before the Lord.

“And the priest that is anointed shall take of the bullock’s blood, and bring it to the tabernacle of the congregation:

“And the priest shall dip his finger in the blood, and sprinkle of the blood seven times before the Lord, before the veil of the sanctuary.

“And the priest shall put some of the blood upon the horns of the altar of sweet incense before the Lord, which is in the tabernacle of the congregation; and shall pour all the blood of the bullock at the bottom of the altar of the burnt offering, which is at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation.

“And he shall take off from it all the fat of the bullock for the sin offering; the fat that covereth the inwards, and all the fat that is upon the inwards,

"And the two kidneys, and the fat that is upon them, which is by the flanks, and the caul above the liver, with the kidneys, it shall he take away,

"As it was taken off from the bullock of the sacrifice of peace offerings: and the priest shall burn them upon the altar of the burnt offering."

It seemed to Jesus, as it seems to us, that all these details about blood and fat and liver and kidneys, had no direct connection with sin or the forgiveness of sin.

In that same book of laws, which is called Leviticus, were other rules regarding the sacrifices to be offered for sins of many kinds. The Jews washed out their sins with the blood of lambs and goats. And always in their minds was the fear of uncleanness to their bodies. Now Jesus did not deny that all these rules for bodily cleanliness were good; but he wanted them to make their hearts clean also. And he wanted them to keep clean the Temple at Jerusalem, which was called the House of God.

The Temple, which was the centre of Jewish life, had come to be like a marketplace, and its courts were full of men who bought and sold. This seemed to Jesus to be sacrilege, the profanation of a holy place, and he determined to make an end of it.

The morning on which he had withered the barren fig-tree, Jesus came again to the Temple with his disciples. During the week of the Passover, Jerusalem was full of strangers. The merchants and peddlers who drove a thriving business in the court of the Temple were already there, calling out the things which they had for sale or exchange. In one corner were men selling beasts for the bloody sacrifices, in another corner were men selling doves, in other places were the money-changers, talking in loud voices; and here and there were groups of men, Pharisees and others, still arguing and quarrelling over

unimportant points of the law. If one man said that a verse of the scripture had a certain meaning, his neighbour would declare that it meant quite another thing, and then the two would argue and wrangle, and all the people who stood by would wrangle, gesticulating with their arms and shouting, until a person unaccustomed to their ways would have thought that they were all on the point of blows. And through this din of argument were constantly heard the shouts of the vendors of beasts and doves, and the shrill voices of the money-changers.

Into this noisy court came Jesus with his disciples. He stood there for awhile in silence, listening and watching. To him the very thought of killing animals and smearing their blood upon the altars of the Temple was repugnant. As he stood there, with his brows sternly knit, he thought of those words which Isaiah the prophet had written:

“To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the Lord. I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he goats. When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand, to tread my courts?”

Surely, indeed, thought Jesus, God his Father was full of the burnt offerings of rams and the fat of fed beasts! They smeared His house with blood; they set up shops within the sacred enclosure; they made of the very sacrifices which they offered to Him a source of profit; and instead of serving Him in humility and truth, they wrangled, wrangled, wrangled about the sayings of the prophets. Some even used the court of the Temple as a short-cut, when they wanted to go somewhere on the other side, carrying bundles and vessels of various sorts through the Temple court, as if it had been a public square.

Even in their prayers, the Jews turned to see if other people were looking at them and admiring their piety.

And the priests! At Jerusalem the priests themselves were cold and formal. They smiled superior smiles at the pilgrims who came from afar, and who seemed really to feel the sacredness of the Temple. To the priests, the Temple and its ceremonies were a means of livelihood. To Jesus, the worship of God meant also the love of one's fellowmen; but what love for their fellowmen had those priests, Pharisees, and scribes?

But perhaps there was nothing about the old Jewish religion which troubled Jesus more than that constant killing of gentle dumb animals as sacrifices to God. Jesus loved animals. He knew that God could not be pleased to have them killed, and to have their innocent blood smeared upon the altars of His house.

Standing there that morning with his disciples, in the midst of the uproar in the court of the Temple, Jesus came fully to realise that between the pure religion which he was sent by his Father to preach, and this old Jewish religion of blood and formality, there could be no union, no sympathy. Some of the scribes had already discussed the possibility that the Messiah, when he came, would bring a new law; but now that the Messiah was really come, they would accept neither him nor his law. And that new law—what was it? Simply this: "Thou shalt love thy neighbor *as thyself*." The religion taught by Jesus was so simple that even a child could comprehend it; and yet it seemed beyond the comprehension of these learned priests and scribes.

We can see Jesus standing there in the noisy court of the Temple, tall and quiet, with a look of determination on his face. Heretofore he had taught by gentleness alone; but the Jews could not understand gentleness. It

seemed to them to be but a form of weakness. Very well. He would teach them to-day in a language which they *could* understand.

There was lying on the ground beside Jesus a whip made of small cords, which had probably been used to drive into the Temple enclosure the unoffending dumb beasts which were to be sold for sacrifice. The disciples saw Jesus stoop and pick up this whip. Then they saw their Master, usually so quiet and gentle, go swiftly toward that part of the court where stood those that sold animals and those that sold doves. They saw him raise the whip in his hand, the many-corded lash circled in the air and then came down upon the back of the nearest trader in beasts, who capered with pain. They saw him raise the whip again, and again it came down upon the back of a man who sold doves. Again and again he raised the whip, and each time it descended upon some one who was desecrating the holy place, while his clear, strong voice rose above the noises of the court, saying:

“It is written, my house shall be called the house of prayer; and ye have made it a den of thieves.”

And he drove them out of the Temple court before the lash of his whip—all them that sold beasts and all them that sold doves, while the disciples looked on with admiration and the Jews looked on with astonishment.

Then Jesus came back into the court, and he went to the tables of the money-changers, who a moment before had been calling out their unholy trade, and he overthrew their tables so that the coins rolled on the pavement; then at the end of his whiplash he drove the money-changers also out of the Temple, saying to them, as he had said to the others:

“It is written, my house shall be called the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves.”

Then he stood at the entrance and drove back those who came there with burdens on their shoulders or in their hands, those who would have carried their vessels of water through the court of the Temple as if it had been a public square, merely to shorten their road.

There were children standing by, and when they saw Jesus they raised their fresh young voices, saying, as they had heard the disciples say:

“Hosanna to the son of David!”

When the chief priests and the scribes saw what the Master had done, and when they heard the children crying, “Hosanna to the son of David,” which was a phrase they had for the expected Messiah, they were enraged; and they said harshly to Jesus:

“Hearest thou what these say?”

They wanted Jesus to reprove the children for daring to call him the Son of David. But the Master only looked at them steadily and answered:

“Yea, have ye not read, Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise?”

And the priests and scribes did not know what to respond. They had seen how the pilgrims from other cities, the pilgrims who had come to Jerusalem for the Passover and whom the haughty priests regarded as common people, looked at Jesus with love, and freely expressed their admiration of his action in driving the vendors and money-changers out of the Temple. For many of the pilgrims had also felt that the Temple in the Holy City was not a proper place for buying and selling; but they had not dared to say so until the Master set them an example by his courage.

The priests wanted now more than ever to kill Jesus, for they saw that if they left him undisturbed he would gain a greater and greater influence over the people.

And if the pure religion of Jesus gained the people, what would become of the priests with their fat livings and their high position in Jerusalem?

The Master, passing again into the Temple, was surrounded by many poor people and many lame and blind, who called on him to help them. And as he healed these of their infirmities, the children cried again and again with their fresh, pure voices:

“Hosanna to the son of David! Hosanna to the son of David!”

The priests and scribes slunk away, for they could not endure to hear the praises of the children, nor the thanks of the lame and blind whom Jesus had healed. And the Master was left alone with those who loved him, in the Temple court which he had cleansed of impurity.

When the night shadows drew down, he returned again to Bethany, on the hill beyond the city, where lived Mary and Martha and Lazarus, and many others who now believed on him.

CHAPTER XXIX

THE MASTER AND THE QUESTIONERS

The next day after Jesus had purified the Temple, by casting out of it the money-changers and scourging those who sold animals and doves there for the sacrifices, he stayed in Jerusalem all day long with his disciples, teaching the people and answering the questions of the scribes and Pharisees. For though the Jews did not believe on him, they liked to ask him questions. Their reasons for questioning him were mixed. They prided themselves upon their subtlety in argument, they liked the sound of their own voices, they hoped to entangle him in his talk, and they had a great curiosity as to what he would say. They had no real desire to learn from him, because they were themselves too fond of teaching.

But we must not despise the Jews *as a race* because the Jews in Jerusalem at the time of Jesus were vain and insincere. Jesus himself was a Jew—this we must never forget; and the race from which he sprang was a great race, with a long history and a sound morality. The people who had followed Jesus in Galilee were Jews, Mary and Martha were Jews, and so were the twelve disciples. But the priests and Pharisees of Jerusalem were very different to the gentle and sympathetic people who loved Jesus. It was against the *evils* of Judaism, not against the Jewish people, that the Master preached.

That morning, as Jesus was teaching in the Temple, the chief priests and elders came to him, and said:

"By what authority doest thou these things? and who gave thee this authority?"

Jesus answered their question by asking another. He said:

"I also will ask you one thing, which if ye tell me, I in likewise will tell you by what authority I do these things. The baptism of John, whence was it? from heaven, or of men?"

The priests and elders counselled together, not knowing what answer to make; for, if they said that the baptism of John was from heaven, Jesus would ask them why then they had not believed John when he declared that Jesus was the son of God. And if they answered that the baptism of John was of men—that is, that it was not inspired by God—the people would be angry with them, because the people believed that John was a prophet. The priests and elders were afraid of offending the people. So, after counselling together, they answered the question of Jesus by saying:

"We cannot tell."

"Neither tell I you by what authority I do these things," replied Jesus.

Then he told them parables, stories with an inner meaning, which could bring home to their minds the things he wanted to say to them about their wickedness and unbelief. Among these parables was the following, which illustrated their refusal to accept him whom God had sent. Jesus said:

"There was a certain householder, which planted a vineyard, and hedged it round about, and digged a winepress in it, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country:

"And when the time of the fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the husbandmen, that they might receive the fruits of it.

"And the husbandmen took his servants, and beat one, and killed another, and stoned another.

"Again, he sent other servants more than the first: and they did unto them likewise.

"But last of all he sent unto them his son, saying, They will reverence my son.

"But when the husbandmen saw the son, they said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance.

"And they caught him, and cast him out of the vineyard, and slew him.

"When the lord therefore of the vineyard cometh, what will he do unto those husbandmen?"

And the priests and elders, not understanding at first the hidden meaning in the parable, answered that the householder would miserably destroy those wicked men, and would let his vineyard unto other husbandmen, which should render him the fruits in their season. Thus they condemned themselves out of their own mouths, unwittingly.

And Jesus said to them:

"Did ye never read in the scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes?

"Therefore say I unto you, the kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.

"And whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder."

When the priests and elders realised that Jesus meant that *they* were the wicked husbandmen of the parable, they were angrier than ever at him. They would have seized him then and there, and would have killed him, had they not been afraid of the multitude which stood listening to his words. For the common people took Jesus for a great prophet, even many of those who did not understand that he was really the Messiah.

And the Master, seeing the anger in the faces of the priests and elders, told them another parable, which illustrated still further their blindness and unbelief. He said:

“The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son,

“And sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding: and they would not come.

“Again, he sent forth other servants, saying, Tell them which are bidden, Behold, I have prepared my dinner: my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready: come unto the marriage.

“But they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise:

“And the remnant took his servants, and entreated them spitefully, and slew them.

“But when the king heard thereof, he was wroth: and he sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city.

“Then said he to his servants, The wedding is ready, but they which were bidden were not worthy.

“Go ye therefore into the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage.

“So those servants went out into the highways, and gathered together all as many as they found, both bad and good: and the wedding was furnished with guests.

"And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment:

"And he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless.

"Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

"For many are called, but few are chosen."

By this parable Jesus meant that because the Jews had refused to come into the kingdom of heaven, which he symbolised by the wedding of the king's son, God would call the Gentiles, the people of other nations, and would give his kingdom to them.

And what did he mean by the *one* guest, who had not on a wedding garment? Perhaps he meant one of his own disciples, Judas Iscariot, who was already unfaithful to the Master in his heart, and who would soon put his unfaithfulness into action, to the point of utter betrayal. Did Judas realise this, as he listened to the parable? I cannot say.

But the priests and elders, being still further enraged by this parable, again took counsel together as to how they could entangle Jesus in his talk. Though the Master never meddled with politics, if they could get him to say something which might be construed as being against the rule of the Romans, perhaps they could thus get him into trouble with the Roman authorities, and procure his death in that way. So they stood a little apart, and sent spies of theirs to talk with Jesus—spies who should pretend to be just men. And these spies said to him, with a great show of respect:

"Master, we know that thou art true, and teachest the way of God in truth, neither carest thou for any man: for

thou regardest not the person of man. Tell us therefore, What thinkest thou? Is it lawful to give tribute unto Cæsar, or not?"

But Jesus saw their wickedness, how they were trying to get him to say something against the Romans, and he answered them:

"Why tempt ye me, ye hypocrites? Show me the tribute money."

They brought him a penny, which was stamped with the image of Cæsar. And Jesus said, pointing to the head upon the penny:

"Whose is this image and superscription?"

They answered that it was Cæsar's.

Then said Jesus, "Render therefore unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's; and unto God the things that are God's."

When the spies heard his answer, and perceived how much keener his mind was than their own, they marvelled at him; and knowing that they could never succeed in entangling him in that way, they left him, and went back to their masters, the priests and elders.

After the spies went away, the Sadducees came to Jesus and put their questions. The Sadducees were those Jews who did not believe that there was any future for the soul after the death of the body. As Jesus taught the resurrection of the soul and the life in the hereafter, the Sadducees sought by their questions to make the idea of resurrection ridiculous. They said:

"Master, Moses said, If a man die, having no children, his brother shall marry his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother.

"Now there were with us seven brethren: and the first, when he had married a wife, deceased, and, having no issue, left his wife unto his brother:

"Likewise the second also, and the third, unto the seventh.

"And last of all the woman died also.

"Therefore in the resurrection whose wife shall she be of the seven? for they all had her."

Jesus answered them:

"Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God.

"For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven.

"But as touching the resurrection of the dead, have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying:

"I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living."

When the Sadducees heard this, they were astonished at his teaching. The idea that heaven was a spiritual place had never occurred to them. They went away, wagging their heads. How could men be like the angels? they wondered. Could Abraham and Isaac and Jacob be really alive somewhere—when they were not on the earth? The very idea was preposterous to the Sadducees, who did not believe in the life after death.

When the Pharisees saw that Jesus had put the Sadducees to silence, they came also with other questions. The Pharisees, you will remember, were those Jews who claimed to be very learned in the Jewish law, and who laid great stress upon all the little rules of Moses. You recall the nicknames, "bloody-browed Pharisees" and "bandy-legged Pharisees," which the people called them, because of their absurd and strutting ways in walking. Of course, when the Pharisees came, in their turn, to question Jesus, they asked him regarding the letter of the scriptures; and one of them, a lawyer, said:

"Master, which is the greatest commandment of the law?"

Jesus answered:

"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment.

"And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

"On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets."

"Well, Master," replied the lawyer, "thou hast said the truth: for there is one God; and there is none other but He: and to love Him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love his neighbour as himself, is more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices."

Jesus looked at the man, whose face was earnest and thoughtful. Though he was a Pharisee of Jerusalem, it was plain that he admired the Master from Nazareth and felt the beauty of his teaching. In admitting that to love God with all his strength and to love his neighbour as himself was more than all burnt offerings put together, he proved himself to be very different to the other Pharisees; and Jesus said to him:

"Thou art not far from the kingdom of heaven."

After that none of them dared to ask Jesus any more questions; they merely listened to what he had to say.

In telling you about the teaching of Jesus in the Temple that day, I am giving his exact words, instead of trying to interpret them; for the sayings of Jesus were more eloquent than any words of mine could be—more eloquent than the words of any other man who ever lived and whose words have been recorded. He now spoke to his disciples and to the multitude, saying:

“The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses’s seat: All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not.

“For they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men’s shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers.

“But all their works they do for to be seen of men: they make broad their phylacteries, and enlarge the borders of their garments, and love the uppermost rooms at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues, and greetings in the markets, and to be called of men, Rabbi, Rabbi.

“But be not ye called Rabbi: for one is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren.

“And call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven.

“Neither be ye called masters: for one is your Master, even Christ.

“But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant.

“And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted.”

We can well imagine that the scribes and Pharisees who listened must have writhed at words like these. We can see them in imagination, pulling at their long beards, their eyes shifting beneath the clear glance of Jesus, as he read their hearts and showed them what they were. No one before had ever dared to tell the Pharisees that they were hypocrites, who only did their works to be seen and praised of men. When Jesus said that he who exalted himself should be abased, he predicted the abasement of the self-exalted Pharisees, and they knew it.

When the Master needed a living illustration for his

teaching, something always happened to furnish him with the illustration. As he was telling the scribes and Pharisees what they really were and were not, a poor woman, a widow, came to the place where he was standing, which was beside the treasury of the Temple. Jesus had seen the rich people come up, one by one, and put their money into the treasury; and these rich people were always careful that the size and value of the coins which they gave to God should be seen by those who stood by. But when the poor widow came, in her worn garments and with her face lean with hunger, she threw into the treasury two mites, which made a farthing—about the value of one-fourth of an English penny, or half an American cent. The heart of Jesus throbbed with love and pity, for he knew that the two mites which the widow had cast into the treasury were all she had, and that she would probably have no supper to eat that night. And he said to his disciples:

“Verily I say unto you, That this poor widow hath cast more in, than all they which have cast into the treasury: For all they did cast in of their abundance; but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living.”

Then Jesus turned again to the scribes and Pharisees who stood by, and he said:

“But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in.

“Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye devour widows’ houses, and for a pretence make long prayer: therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation.”

Then he took up some of their sayings and beliefs,

and proved them to be utterly without sincerity. The Jews had a rule that he who should swear by the Temple to do something, or to pay some debt, was not held by the oath; but that he who should swear by the gold in the Temple, was held by that oath. And they had another rule that to swear by the altar was nothing, but that a man was responsible if he swore by the gift upon the altar.

"Which is the greater," asked Jesus, "the gold, or the Temple which sanctifieth the gold? . . . And which is greater, the gift, or the altar that sanctifieth the gift?

"Ye blind guides, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel."

And much more also the Master said to them that afternoon, convicting them of their hypocrisy. For Jesus came not only to love the world, but to teach the world a better way of living; and there are some who cannot learn by honeyed words. He reminded them that they were the descendants of those Jews who had killed the prophets in the olden time; and knowing that they wished to kill him, as their fathers had killed the prophets, he now said to them:

"Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers."

And the Pharisees huddled together and listened to Jesus with blanched faces, for with his plain speaking this day they had become more than ever afraid of him. What would he not do, they wondered, if they allowed him to live? Surely he would turn all the people against them; he would make all men follow him and seek for the kingdom of heaven, so that they would no longer care to bring their sacrifices to the Temple, nor to pay their money to the priests. Had not the prophets declared that the Messiah when he came should bring a new law?

They remembered what Jesus himself had said, at another time:

“No man putteth a piece of new cloth into an old garment, for that which is put in to fill it up taketh from the garment, and the rent is made worse.

“Neither do men put new wine into old bottles: else the bottles break, and the wine runneth out, and the bottles perish: but they put new wine into new bottles, and both are preserved.”

The priests and Pharisees knew that Jesus meant by this that his religion would do away with the old Jewish law. If so, it would also do away with the priests and the Pharisees—would take away all their power. It was because his teaching threatened to make things harder for *them*, that the priests and Pharisees hated Jesus. What cared they for the kingdom of heaven? But the tithes of mint and anise and cummin had a meaning, to say nothing of the gold of the treasury by which they swore. As they stood there listening to Jesus, the nails of their clenched hands must have cut into their palms. Only a few more days, they said to themselves, should this Nazarene live to trouble their peace of mind.

As the Master was about to leave the Temple and to return once more to the quiet Mount of Olives, he spoke these words to the unbelieving city:

“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killst the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!

“Behold, your house is left unto you desolate.”

Followed by his twelve disciples, he passed out of the portal of the Temple, leaving the priests and the elders and the scribes and the Pharisees behind him.

As they stood outside, the disciples called the attention of Jesus to the great buildings, the pillared courts, the glittering marbles; for at that time the great Temple at Jerusalem was quite new, and the outer portions were not even finished. And one of the disciples said:

"Master, see what manner of stones and what buildings are here!"

But Jesus did not look with admiring eyes at the Temple. It did not seem to him any longer to be a place where God was worshipped in spirit and in truth. Rather it was a new and useless monument to a dead and corrupted faith. And he said to his disciples:

"Seest thou these great buildings? There shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down."

Then, turning his back upon the Temple, Jesus passed out of the city and went toward the Mount of Olives, still followed by his disciples.

CHAPTER XXX

ON THE MOUNT OF OLIVES

During the last week of Jesus in Jerusalem, he usually spent the night with his disciples upon the Mount of Olives. This hill received its beautiful name from the olive-trees which grew there in abundance. From its green side one could look down upon the city of Jerusalem. After spending the early evening in Bethany with his friends, Jesus would come out here with the twelve men, and lying upon the ground, they would watch the far-off glittering stars until they fell asleep. Sometimes they would talk for a little while, the disciples asking questions about God and the kingdom of heaven. Sometimes they would be silent, each man absorbed in his own thoughts. This quiet retreat upon the Mount of Olives, after the noisy day in Jerusalem, was for Jesus a sweet refreshment, a going back to Nature for peace and poise. God seemed near, out there among the olive-trees, under the quiet stars; and all the strife and wrangling of Jerusalem seemed far away.

The night following the day on which he had answered the questions of the scribes and Pharisees in the great Temple, the Master came out here, as usual, with his disciples. He walked a little distance away from the others and sat down upon a great rock. How still everything was, and how peaceful! Even the enmity of the Jews in Jerusalem seemed here like an unreal dream. Here only God seemed real—He and His love for this green

earth, which was only a place of trial for His children. Jesus was almost happy, as he sat there alone that night, under the sympathetic stars. He seemed to breathe the atmosphere of eternity, and could consider without too great sadness all the terrible things which he knew were going to happen in the world.

But soon he heard footsteps coming near, and turning his head, he saw in the starlight four of his disciples, Peter, with Andrew his brother, and the brothers James and John. They had left the other men back there somewhere among the shadows of the night, and had sought the Master in secret, that they might learn from him the truth about certain questions which were troubling their minds.

They sat down at the feet of Jesus, around the base of the rock, and began to ask him about his second coming, and about the end of the present world. For Jesus had told them that, though he was soon going to his Father in heaven, he would return to the world some day and would bring the kingdom of heaven with him. And the four disciples now asked him *when* that time would be.

And Jesus answered them that, when he was gone, they must take heed that no man deceived them. He said that other men would come saying that *they* were the Christ, and that many persons would be deceived, believing that these false prophets were the Son of man himself. He told them that before he should return to the world there would be many wars, that nation would rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom, that there would be famine and pestilence and earthquakes—that all these things would be only the beginning of sorrows. But the end would not be yet.

And when the four men asked how it would be with *them*, in this time of trial which was to come, the Master

answered that his disciples, in that dark time, would be delivered up to councils of men; that in the Jewish synagogues they would be beaten; that they would be brought before rulers and kings, who would question them concerning Jesus and the gospel which they preached in his name.

But, he told them, when those in authority should turn to them for testimony of the Son of man, they should not think beforehand of what they were going to say; but that they should trust in the living Christ, who would be always with them in their hearts, and would give them such wisdom in answering questions that all their enemies should not be able to reason against them. Though the answers came from their mouths, it would really be the Holy Spirit which should speak *through* them.

The four disciples were filled with wonder at the idea of the Holy Spirit using them for a mouthpiece, and they naturally supposed that the kings and rulers would consider them very highly in the days when such things should be. But Jesus told them, instead, that they should be delivered up to be afflicted, that men should kill them, and that they should be hated of all nations because they were the apostles of Christ. Yet, he assured them, if they endured unto the end, they should dwell with him in the kingdom of heaven.

And he told them that in that dark time brothers should betray their brothers to death, that fathers should betray their sons, that children should rise up against their parents and cause them to be put to death, that many false prophets would arise and would deceive the world; and that because of all this confusion and hatred, wherein it would be difficult to know what was true from what was false, the love of many of his own followers would grow cold; but that they, like the disciples, who

should endure unto the end, would also be saved with Christ in the kingdom of heaven.

Jesus told them that this gospel of the kingdom of heaven should be preached throughout all the world, to all the nations of the earth, and that when this was accomplished the Christ would come again. But before that blessed consummation, when all nations should know the religion of Jesus, the dark time must first be passed through.

The four disciples had still not a very clear understanding of what the dark time would be like, and they wanted to know what would really happen in those days.

Jesus told them that they should possess their souls in patience; that when they saw Jerusalem compassed with armies, they should know that the desolation thereof was nigh. When they should see standing in the holy place the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel the prophet, them that were in Judaea should flee into the mountains; he who was on the house-top should not come down to take anything out of his house; neither should the man who was in the field return to take his clothes. Jesus said that they should pray that their flight be not in winter, nor on the Sabbath day; for there should be great tribulation, such as had not been from the beginning of the world unto that time, nor ever should be again. Except those days should be shortened by God, he said, no one would be saved alive; but that for the sake of the elect of God, those days would be shortened; for they were the days of vengeance, that all the things which had been written might be fulfilled.

And Jesus told them further that in those dark days there should be great wrath upon the people of Israel, that many should fall by the sword, and many be led away

captive unto other nations, and that Jerusalem should be trodden down by the Gentiles.

Then he warned them again against the false prophets who were to come, declaring that they were the Christ, and showing signs and wonders to the people, so that by their false works they should deceive even the elect of God.

Wherefore, Jesus told his disciples, if any one should say to them [that Christ was in the desert, they should not go forth to seek him there; and if any one should say that Christ was in the secret chambers, they should not believe it; for, he told them, “as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.”

And the four disciples listened with bated breath and with wide and troubled eyes. They now understood that Jesus was really going away from them; but *how* he was going they did not know. Notwithstanding all that he had told them regarding the coming death of the Son of man through the enmity of the Jews, that he should be scourged and killed as if he were a common malefactor, they did not comprehend that he meant it in a literal sense. To them it seemed, even yet, that their Master would be caught up to heaven in a blaze of glory.

And now they asked him how, after he should have left them and gone to the Father, and after the days of tribulation also, they should know beforehand that the Christ was coming soon, and be prepared for him.

And Jesus answered them that after the days of tribulation there should be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; that the sea and the waves of the sea should roar, and that men’s hearts should fail them for fear, as they saw the things which had come upon the earth and saw also the powers of heaven shaken. Then,

said Jesus, the Son of man would come in a cloud, with power and great glory. When all these predicted things had happened, the disciples should lift up their heads, for then they would know that their redemption was near. And the Christ, the Son of man, would send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and the angels would gather together the elect of Christ from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

As the four disciples heard this promise of the Master to come again with power and glory, their eyes were aflame with faith. In imagination they saw him appear in the heavens; they saw the form of Jesus, which they loved, suddenly shining in the sky above the troubled earth; they heard the trumpet of the angels. The face of John, especially, was illuminated with the fire of his enthusiasm; for John loved Jesus with an intense love. On him had been bestowed at birth the divine gift of imagination; and long years afterward, when he came to write his Revelation, it is almost certain that his mind went back to this hour upon the Mount of Olives, and to the words which Jesus spoke there under the stars. The vision which he had at this moment, as he listened to the voice of Jesus predicting his second coming, made possible that other and greater vision upon the Isle of Patmos.

After a short silence, the Master again spoke to them. When the fig-tree put forth its leaves, he said, they knew that the summer was nigh; so also, when they should see the terrible things he had predicted for the days of desolation, they would know that the kingdom of heaven was near.

"Heaven and earth shall pass away," he said, "but my words shall not pass away."

Not even the angels of heaven, Jesus told them, knew

when the hour of his coming would be; but only God the Father. For as in the days of Noah before the flood, they were eating and drinking and marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and the great waters came and carried them all away; so should it be with the coming of the Son of man.

In that day, said Jesus, the angels of God should gather the saved together from all the quarters of the earth. Two men should be together in a field; the one should be taken by the angels and the other left. Two women should be grinding at a mill; the one should be taken and the other left.

Jesus told his friends that they must be always watching for his coming. He said:

“For the Son of man is as a man taking a far journey, who left his house, and gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work, and commanded the porter to watch.

“Watch ye therefore: for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cockcrowing, or in the morning: Lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping.”

As the four disciples listened with shining eyes, they told themselves that after Jesus should have left them and returned to the Father, they would be ever on the watch, lest the Christ should come back unawares and find them sleeping.

To these men, the coming of the kingdom of heaven was as real and certain as the coming of the springtime is with us. As in the dead of winter, when the snows fall, and the winds blow, and the cold pierces to our bones, we think longingly of the springtime with its roses and warmth and soft breezes; so the disciples, in the sad and selfish world which surrounded them, dreamed of the king-

dom of heaven, dreamed of the time when Jesus should come again, as he had promised, and should take them to a place where there would be no more sadness or selfishness or pain or strife, where every man would love his neighbour as himself, and all would be happy in the bosom of Christ.

It is no wonder that such a faith, in the hearts of even a few, had power to change the world; and though the kingdom of heaven has not yet come to men, there are still a few, here and there upon the earth, who dream as the disciples dreamed, and who watch for the coming of the Christ.

That his friends might ever watch without weariness, Jesus told them another parable, that of the wise and foolish virgins. As you will often hear this parable referred to, I will tell it to you now, in the very words of Jesus. He said:

"Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom.

"And five of them were wise, and five were foolish.

"They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them:

"But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps.

"While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept.

"And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him.

"Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps.

"And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out.

"But the wise answered, saying, Not so; lest there be

not enough for us and you: but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves.

"And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut.

"Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us.

"But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not.

"Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh."

One reason why the teaching of Jesus had such a charm for men, was because of the beautiful symbols which he used in speaking of himself. To those who loved him, he was the bridegroom of the parable of the virgins, the one for whose coming all watched with eagerness. He called himself the lamb of God, because the people to whom he was talking were born of a race of shepherds, who loved the sheep, and in whose minds the very idea of a lamb suggested gentleness and love. When he said, at another time, that he was the rose of Sharon and the lily of the valley, the names of these familiar flowers called up visions of beauty and sweetness. Not only should they love him as their Master, but they should love him as they loved the roses and the lilies, whose fragrance could make them forget the sadness of the world. If we knew nothing of the history of Jesus, and had only his sayings to judge him by, we would still pronounce him the supreme genius of the world. When he said, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest," he made it impossible that the weary souls of earth should ever forget him.

If, in the years to come, you shall study the sayings

of all the greatest teachers of the world, of Manu, of Buddha, of Confucius, of Lao-tsze, of Socrates, of Plato, of Mahomet, and shall compare them with the simple sayings of Jesus, you will still say, with me, that no other man who ever lived could speak as Jesus spoke.

And he said that night to the four disciples who were there with him on the Mount of Olives:

“When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory:

“And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats:

“And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left.

“Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:

“For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me.

“Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee?

“And the King shall answer and say unto them, *Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.*”

And he told them also that he would say to those on the left hand, those who were unfit for the kingdom of heaven, that inasmuch as they had *not* fed the hungry, nor clothed the naked, nor visited the sick, nor minis-

tered to their brethren in prison, *they had not done these things for him.*

Can we wonder, then, that those who try to follow Jesus still feed the hungry, and clothe the naked, and visit the sick, and minister to those in prison? For to love the Christ is to love to do these things *for him.* And should any one ever tell you that Christianity has been a failure in the world, because the world is still cold and selfish, because men still despise and hate and speak evil of their fellowmen, instead of loving them, you can truthfully answer that real Christianity, the Christianity of Jesus, has never been practised except by a very few, from the days of the apostles until now. Will it ever be practised by the many? Perhaps. And if it ever should be, then the kingdom of heaven, of which Jesus told his disciples that night upon the Mount of Olives, will come to the world, and men will dwell in the kingdom of heaven though they still walk the earth.

CHAPTER XXXI

JUDAS ISCARIOT

There are certain names which, whenever they are spoken, remind the hearer of certain qualities. When we hear the name of Alexander, for example, we think immediately of war, of conquest, of empire. The name of Plato suggests philosophy and high-thinking. We can hardly hear the name of Nero without shuddering at the ideas of cruelty which go with it. And the name of the man I am going to tell you about in this story is one of those which carry a definite meaning. But the name of Judas, instead of summoning ideas of conquest and high-thinking, calls up a very different thought—the thought of *treachery*.

In reading about the ministry of Jesus, and about the men who travelled with him as his disciples through Galilee and Judæa, you have often read the name of Judas Iscariot. You remember how, at the supper in Bethany, the evening before the day on which the disciples strewed palm branches for their Master to ride over at Bethphage near Jerusalem, Judas had been angry with Mary Magdalene for breaking the alabaster box and anointing the head and feet of Jesus with the precious ointment of spikenard. You also remember having read that John, the beloved disciple, did not trust Judas, but declared that he was a thief who sometimes stole the money from the purse which Jesus had given him to carry. Yet these incidents, while unlovely in them-

selves, were as nothing in comparison with what Judas was to do afterward.

During the last week in Jerusalem, many things had happened to trouble Judas. He had believed that his Master would be glorified immediately, that Jesus would reveal himself in such a way that the scribes and Pharisees and all the other unbelieving Jews would be obliged to worship him. He could not have told, for certain, just *what* he expected—perhaps that a flaming cloud would come down out of heaven, and that Jesus would be snatched up to glory amid the plaudits of the multitude. Judas loved plaudits. In Galilee he had delighted to be one of the followers of Jesus, because the simple people in Galilee hailed Jesus as a Master and did him honours; but Judas did not like the shrugs and sneers of the high priests in Jerusalem. If the Master were really the Messiah of the Jews, he reasoned, why should not the high priests be aware of it? Why, Jesus could not even enter the Holy of Holies—the inner place in the great Temple! Only the high priest could go in there. Surely something must be wrong! Could it be that Jesus was not really the Messiah, after all?

There is no seed which grows so fast as the seed of doubt. From the moment when Judas first doubted that his Master was the Messiah, his treachery began. Some persons may believe that Judas was altogether bad from the beginning; but that is not possible, because Jesus named him as a disciple. Jesus had love and pity for the weak, the erring and the sinful; but he would not have made the compact of discipleship with the devil, or with a man who was altogether of the devil. No, there was good as well as evil in the heart of Judas, and it was the good which Jesus saw and had tried to foster.

When you are older, you may hear learned discussions

upon the subject of free will; but there is no better illustration of the doctrine of free will than Judas Iscariot. Judas had every opportunity to be true, and he could deliberately be false to the Master, because his will was free. He was not forced to this betrayal by necessity.

As Jesus himself taught that we should try to understand the hearts of others in order that we may truly pity them, it is for us to try to understand Judas. It may not be easy, but we can at least try. If we look deep, we shall probably find that it was selfishness, vanity and jealousy that ruined Judas, as they have ruined so many others before and since.

We know that Judas came from Kerioth, in the south, that he was the only one of the disciples who was not a Galilean. This alone made him feel different to the others, a stranger and an alien. He wanted to be first in the friendship of the Master, and he was not first. He was not even second, or third. It is true that he carried the purse; but money was never considered very highly by Jesus. And Judas knew quite well why Jesus had made him treasurer; it was because some of the others had said that he was a thief.

John did not like Judas, and it was he who had started the story that Judas was not honest. The man from Kerioth had never forgiven this. Not only did he have a grudge against John, but he was very jealous of him. John was young and beautiful, and Judas was neither beautiful nor young. John was the beloved disciple, the confidant of the Master, and Judas was—the treasurer. It was he who was sent out to buy things; it was John who remained with Jesus, in intimate and loving converse with him.

Sometimes when Judas came back from one of his errands in the markets, and saw John leaning on the

bosom of Jesus, his young and wistful face upraised to the face of the Master, Judas could hardly control his desire to snatch the young man away from his place beside Jesus. What right, Judas would mutter to himself, had John to think that Jesus loved him best? The Master had never said so. Then it seemed to Judas that John's mother, Salome, was always pushing him forward. Judas had no mother, and women did not like him very well. They liked John. Even the mother of Jesus was always turning to him with her soft and patient smile. And Mary Magdalene! Judas could have struck John sometimes when he saw Mary lean upon his arm.

All these grudges and exasperations Judas had borne as patiently as he could, for he had loved the Master more than he had ever loved any other being. Indeed, Jesus was the only one who had ever seemed really to care for him. When he had been called to be a disciple, it had seemed to Judas that all his trials were over. He did not know that discipleship was the beginning of trials, that it was a test of character and strength—not a reward. Jesus had called some of his friends the first time he saw them, trusting to the future to prove their fitness. Their reward was to come in the kingdom of heaven; though it seems to us that the privilege of being with Jesus was in itself the supreme reward.

But now, when Judas began to doubt that his Master was really going to be glorified, after all, he began also to think of the trials which he himself had endured. Then, too, it is more than probable that on that Wednesday morning, after the beautiful talk in regard to the coming of the kingdom of heaven which the four favourite disciples had had with Jesus upon the Mount of Olives, one of the four—perhaps Andrew, perhaps Peter—had told Judas some of the other things which the Master had

said that night: how they were themselves to be persecuted after Jesus should have returned to the Father; how they would be beaten in the synagogues, and delivered up to councils, and hated of all men on account of their relations with the Master. We can well imagine that these predictions were terrible to Judas. To be beaten in the synagogues! To be hated of all men! These were not the prospects for which he had become a disciple.

Jesus must have known that Wednesday morning what was passing in the mind of the man from Kerioth. We can see his gentle eyes fixed intently upon the face of Judas. How he must have pitied him! But not even Jesus could choose for another—his own disciple—the way in which he should walk.

As I have said before, there must have been in Judas some good, or the Master would not have chosen him to be one of his disciples. Perhaps it was the very intensity of his nature which made his discipleship possible, perhaps it was some *power* in him which Jesus hoped to turn altogether in the right way; for power is power, and can be used for good or evil, according to the will of the possessor. This we must never forget. The fire which warms our house may also burn our house, if it is not carefully guarded. The electricity which gives us light and moves our cars and carriages, is the same power which, in the ungoverned lightning, can blast the giant pine-tree or strike a man to death.

Judas left his friends that Wednesday morning in Jerusalem, and wandered away by himself. Jesus was preaching, as usual, in the court of the Temple, and the crowd around him was so great that Judas felt that he would not be missed. There was a terrible idea in his mind, and he wanted to be alone to think about it. He was already unfaithful to Jesus in his heart; and from

thought to action, in a man of his violent temperament, there is often but a step. That step, in the case of Judas, proved to be the short distance which separated the court of the Temple from the palace of Caiaphas, the high priest.

Judas knew that in the palace of the high priest the enemies of Jesus were conspiring against him. Did he deliberately say to himself that he intended to betray his Master? I cannot tell you, and neither can any one else. The thoughts and motives of the simplest man are often obscure even to himself, and Judas was not simple.

Some men who have written about Judas have believed that he betrayed Jesus to the high priests and helped them to arrest him, in the hope that his Master would thereby be obliged to manifest his divinity. If he doubted that Jesus was the Messiah, and was not sure, he may have wanted to put it to the test. But did he really believe that the Master, when arrested and brought to trial, would smite his enemies with the lightning of God? Did he believe that if Jesus were really the Messiah he would be glorified immediately after his arrest; that he would be transfigured, as Peter and James and John had seen him upon Mount Hermon? During the happy days in Galilee, before the real troubles of Jesus began, Judas may have believed that his Master was all-powerful; but it is extremely doubtful if he believed it any longer.

Judas went to the palace of the high priest and asked to see Caiaphas. Notwithstanding the boldness of his action, his heart beat very fast as he passed through the wide doorway of the palace. The doorkeepers stared at him, having already seen him with the Master from Nazareth. What did he want there, they wondered? When Judas was left in an anteroom until his visit should be announced to the high priest, the master of the palace,

there was a great buzzing of tongues among the minions of the priestly household. A disciple of Jesus of Nazareth! The man who carried the money-bag and bought supplies in the markets! We may be sure that the servants made coarse jokes, and asked each other if the treasurer of the Galilean prophet had come with his money-bag to bribe the high priest. The servant boys jeered covertly at him, and winked at each other.

As Judas waited in the anteroom of the high priest, it is possible that the desire to run away came suddenly over him. It was not yet too late. He could tell those jeering boys that it was all a mistake, and walk swiftly out of the palace. But he did not do it. He still sat there and waited until Caiaphas should send for him.

In the council chamber of the palace the high priest was with his father-in-law, Annas, and the other priests and scribes and elders. At the very moment when a servant came to announce that a disciple of the prophet from Nazareth was below and wanted to see the high priest, they were talking about Jesus. Caiaphas had just repeated his former saying, to the effect that Jesus and Judaism could not both continue to exist.

Old Annas, who had been high priest before Caiaphas, and who still retained his influence over the councillors and over his son-in-law, was the most powerful enemy of Jesus. Like all the priests of Jerusalem, these two men were of the Sadducees, the Jewish sect which did not believe in the resurrection, and whose members therefore held even more rigidly to the *forms* of their religion. Believing in no future life, they wanted to get everything possible out of this life. And it was a nice and fat and comfortable position—that of high priest in Jerusalem.

Caiaphas was devoted to the Romans, and did everything he could to please them—everything, that is,

which would not jeopardise his own position among the Jews.

It is easy for one who has ever lived in an oriental country, under the rule of a European empire, to picture Caiaphas, the ambitious and scheming native leader, who curries favour with his masters by adopting their vices, and who only seeks to hold control over his own people because it is by reason of that control that he is petted by his rulers.

If the religion of Jesus should make headway among the Jews, Caiaphas reasoned, the high priest himself would lose influence with them; and if he lost influence among his own people he would lose influence also with the Romans, who made use of him for their own ends, and, as he served those ends, piled honours on him—but not otherwise.

Old Annas, on the contrary, hated Jesus for quite another reason. He had retained more of his Jewish feeling than had the present high priest; he was less modern (using the word in the sense in which it must have been used about the year 30 A.D.) and his hatred of Jesus was intensely bigoted. It was the self-proclaimed Messiah who aroused the wrath of Annas.

Let us take a little liberty of imagination, and try to picture that council of priests and elders, all of them old or middle-aged, sitting together in an inner room of the palace and debating what they could do to get rid of Jesus. Their faces were long and serious, their eyes sharp, their foreheads wrinkled with frowns. How dared this Nazarene, they snarled, disturb the peace of Jerusalem? What were the times coming to, when any self-styled prophet could come into the Temple and preach a new doctrine? Annas, the conservative old Jew, suggested that it all came from permitting their sons to study

Greek; but the more modern Caiaphas reminded him that the people who followed Jesus knew nothing of the culture of the Greeks, and very little of the Jewish. Annas believed that society was being destroyed by tolerating new things. Caiaphas had no objection to new things because they were new; but he objected to Jesus because he was dangerous to law and order. And of course law and order meant the law and order of Caiaphas. The human heart has changed little from those far days until now.

But however the councillors might disagree as to the reasons why the people followed Jesus, they were of one mind in their desire to get rid of him. And one after another suggested plans by which they might take Jesus and kill him. One of the scribes, a mere bookworm who had no judgment where practical things were concerned, suggested that they fall upon Jesus in the Temple and carry him away; but the wiser and more subtle priests pronounced this plan absurd, because the Nazarene was too popular with the crowds. To do such a thing openly would be to bring down upon their heads the wrath of the multitude.

No, the more worldly among them reasoned, it would be necessary to do whatever they had to do as quietly as possible. Caiaphas, of course, was for having it done in accordance with the Roman law. This would be easy, if they could make it seem that Jesus was a blasphemer against the Jewish religion, for the Romans gave the Jews great freedom in matters of religion—in order that they might control them the better in worldly matters. That is always the way of wisdom and of least resistance on the part of the rulers of oriental empires.

One plan after another was suggested and discarded, as being too dangerous. The old priests thought Caiaphas

was too tolerant, Caiaphas thought the old priests were too bigoted. Caiaphas did not really care whether Jesus was a blasphemer or not; but of course he did not say so—he was far too wise for that. So long as the others, and especially Annas, helped him to get rid of Jesus, what did their motives matter to him?

It was finally agreed that they must not kill Jesus during the feast of the Passover, which began two days hence, on Friday night, lest there should be an uproar among the people. No, they had better not wait until then, but act quickly. In order to do that, it would be necessary to know where Jesus spent his time when he was not in the Temple. Of course, in those days there were no newspapers to give details of the private actions and haunts of noted men, and the gossip of an oriental city can never be depended upon for accuracy. Indeed, a dozen different men might say that the Nazarene was in a dozen different places at any given time. They would need to have accurate information as to the whereabouts of Jesus when he was away from the multitude. They all began to discuss the question as to how they could best obtain that information.

Then into this wrangling assembly (for the Jews always wrangled, even in the palace of the high priest) came a servant, timidly, apologetically, and whispered something to Caiaphas. Every one else looked curiously at the two. They saw Caiaphas start, they heard him ask the servant to repeat what he had said, they saw the look of astonishment deepen on the face of the high priest. Then he nodded to the servant, who withdrew, and Caiaphas turned to his fellow-councillors with the simple statement:

“A disciple of Jesus of Nazareth who desires to see me.”

Bombshells had not been invented in those days, so I will not liken the astonishment of the councillors to that following the explosion of a bombshell. I will say, instead, that if the Temple buildings had suddenly fallen, these men would not have been more surprised. After a moment of stupefied silence, they all began talking at once.

A disciple of the Nazarene? What could the man want? Had he come on behalf of his Master to seek reconciliation with the priests? Impossible! The person who suggested that could have little knowledge of Jesus! Which of the disciples was it? Oh, what difference did that make! On the contrary, it made much difference. Were not all Galileans alike? But there was one among the disciples of the Nazarene who was not a Galilean. Oh, yes—the man from Kerioth! An ugly-looking fellow, perhaps it was he. It surely could not be the young and handsome one—for even in Jerusalem the comeliness of John was a subject of comment. Well, they would soon know. Where *was* the man, and why did he not come in?

Finally the door was again opened, and Judas stood on the threshold. Oh, yes, said some one, it was the man from Kerioth! The priests all looked at Judas as if he were some strange kind of wild animal, dropped suddenly down among them. And Judas, indeed, felt rather wild as he stood there in the doorway of the council chamber, before that company of learned men—for to the simple Jews of the lower classes the high priests and scribes of Jerusalem were prodigies of learning.

Caiaphas asked Judas to come in, and the door was closed behind him. The betrayer of his Master was alone with his Master's enemies.

The scene which took place in that room in the high

priest's palace was almost too terrible to describe. The Christian world has shuddered at it ever since. There was made there that Wednesday a deliberate compact between the high priests and Judas, in which the latter promised to do all that the priests desired. But before he made that promise, he asked them how much money they would give him.

This man whom Jesus had loved and called his disciple, this man who had wandered with the master along the pleasant ways of Galilee, who had eaten with him from the same dish and drunk from the same cup, who had listened to his teaching and had sat at his feet, who had seen him still the tempest on the lake of Gennesaret, who had lain near him under the stars and had stood beside him at the bedside of the dying, who had himself preached the faith of Jesus, and had even cast out demons and healed the sick, as all the other disciples had—this man now sold his Master.

We are told that the high priests "covenanted with him for thirty pieces of silver." It is likely that the Jewish priests first offered him less than thirty silver pieces, and that Judas stood out for a higher price. Was not the service which he had to sell really worth more money to the high priests? It was a unique service, Judas must have argued, a service which no one else would perform. *He* knew all the habits and all the haunts of Jesus, and no one else whom the high priests could buy had this intimate knowledge. Yes, at last they agreed to give him thirty silver pieces. It seemed a great deal of money to Judas, who had always been a poor man. Perhaps he could have got more, if he had insisted. Whatever his feelings were, we know that he fulfilled his agreement.

But in order to fulfil his agreement and earn his

thirty silver pieces, it was necessary for him to return to Jesus and his fellow-disciples, that he might inform the priests as to what they were doing. And Judas concurred in all the plans of his new associates, as he had formerly concurred in all the plans of his Master. The efficient treasurer became now the efficient spy.

After he left the high priest's palace, it is likely that he walked about alone for awhile, forming his plans. By this time, the good angel of Judas, which Jesus had recognised and had tried to help, must have spread its white wings and flown away to heaven, leaving Judas to the fate which he had deliberately chosen.

You have read, in Milton perhaps, about the fall of the rebel angels. Here was the fall of a man who had been a disciple, and who might have become a saint. And his reward was to be thirty pieces of silver!

CHAPTER XXXII

THE LAST SUPPER

It was Thursday, the day following that on which Judas had covenanted with the high priests to betray his Master. The unhappy man was now again with Jesus and the other disciples, trying to behave as if nothing had happened. The night before, after leaving Jerusalem, he had gone out with them, as usual, to the Mount of Olives, and had laid himself down to sleep in company with the Master whom he had sold. As he had looked up at the shining stars, perhaps he had counted thirty of them, reminding himself of the thirty pieces of silver which he would earn on the morrow. It is difficult to enter into the soul of a man like Judas, and to understand his feelings now. We may be certain, though, that when he laid himself down to sleep that Wednesday night, he chose a spot as far as possible from Jesus and from the faithful John and Peter.

On Thursday, the disciples asked Jesus where he wished them to prepare a place that he might eat the Passover. And Jesus sent two of his disciples, saying to them:

“Go ye into the city, and there shall meet you a man bearing a pitcher of water: follow him.

“And wheresoever he shall go in, say ye to the good man of the house, The Master saith, Where is the guest-chamber, where I shall eat the Passover with my disciples?

"And he shall shew you a large upper room furnished and prepared: there make ready for us."

The two disciples went into the city, as Jesus had told them, and there they met a man carrying a pitcher of water; and they followed him. When the man went into a house, the disciples went in also. Then, seeing the owner of the house, they said to him exactly what Jesus had told them:

"The Master saith, Where is the guest-chamber, where I shall eat the Passover with my disciples?"

And the owner of the house led the two disciples upstairs, and showed them a large upper chamber furnished with a long table and with divans. And the two disciples prepared a supper there for their Master and his followers.

And in the evening Jesus came with his disciples to the house which the two had found by following the man with the pitcher of water. And they made ready to eat.

In the East men take off their shoes before meals, and often, when they have been walking a long way and their feet are tired and dusty, they bathe them before sitting down at the table. That Thursday evening, when Jesus and the twelve disciples were assembled in that upper room in the strange house in Jerusalem, Jesus laid aside his outer garments, and taking a large towel, he girded himself. The disciples wondered what he was going to do.

Then he poured water into a basin, and began to wash the tired and dusty feet of his disciples, and to wipe them on the towel with which he was girded.

Peter was astonished that the Master should do this humble service for those so much inferior to himself; and when Jesus came to the place where Peter was sitting, the disciple said to him in amazement:

"Lord, dost thou wash my feet?"

Jesus knew how Peter felt, and loved him all the better for it; but there was a profound meaning in what he did, and he wanted Peter to understand. So he said to him, very gently:

"What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter."

But Peter still shrank from letting the Master serve him. He said:

"Thou shalt never wash my feet!"

"If I wash thee not," answered Jesus, "thou shalt have no part in me."

The Master had always taught them by parables and symbols, and now Peter understood a part at least of what Jesus meant, so he assented gladly, saying:

"Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head," meaning that he wished Jesus by his love to purify him completely.

"He that is washed," replied Jesus, "needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit. And ye are clean—but not all."

As he said this, he glanced along the line of his disciples, for he knew already in his heart that one of them was false to him. But the other disciples did not know.

When Jesus had finished washing the feet of the twelve men (including Judas), he put on his garments again, and sat down. Then he said to them:

"Know ye what I have done to you?

"Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am.

"If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet.

"For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you.

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him."

And the disciples looked lovingly at one another, each man (save Judas) wondering how he himself could humbly serve the others, and so follow the beautiful example in humility which the Master had given them. This incident, like everything else which happened that evening, was indelibly stamped upon the memories of the faithful ones. The Master had washed them and had made them clean, they felt. In future they must wash one another—that is, they must help one another to be pure. And they must also be humble, doing the lowest services for all those who were weary and dusty from walking the highways of life.

When they were gathered round the table at supper, and were eating together, the face of Jesus grew very sad, so sad that the faithful disciples wondered what new sorrow was in his heart. Finally he said:

"Verily I say unto you, One of you which eateth with me shall betray me."

The men looked at one another with sorrowful faces, shocked and grieved at the words of Jesus. To the eleven it seemed impossible that a disciple of the Master should betray him. But the heart of Judas leaped into his throat, though he controlled his agitation.

Then one after another the disciples began to question Jesus, saying, "Is it I?" "Is it I?" And Judas also asked, even as the others, "Master, is it I?"

Jesus answered gravely, "It is one of the twelve, that dippeth with me in the dish." Then he added:

"The Son of man indeed goeth, as it is written of him: but woe to that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! Good were it for that man if he had never been born."

As they sat there at supper, John, the beloved disciple, was leaning upon the bosom of the Master, so that he could speak to him without being heard by the others. And Peter beckoned to John, that he should ask Jesus which man it was of whom he had spoken—which of them it was who should betray him.

And John, bringing his mouth close to the ear of Jesus, whispered to him:

“Lord, who is it?”

“He it is,” answered the Master in a low tone, “he it is, to whom I shall give the sop, when I have dipped it.”

Then Jesus took a morsel of bread in his hand, and dipped it in the dish, and when he had dipped it, he gave the sop to Judas Iscariot.

John, in telling the story afterward, said that when Jesus had given him the sop, the devil entered into Judas. By this we suppose he meant that the man’s face darkened with anger, and that he gave some violent expression to his feelings. For Judas had always been envious of John, and when he saw him there on the Master’s breast, and when he saw the glance of mutual understanding which passed between John and Jesus after the sop had been given to him, the pent-up jealousy in the heart of Judas must have burst all bounds. He had now no longer a reason for concealing his perfidy, for it had been discovered.

Jesus said to Judas:

“What thou doest, do quickly.”

Judas turned, and went immediately out of the supper-room. No one but John knew what the Master had meant in telling him to do quickly that which he had to do. The others supposed that, as Judas still had the money-bag, Jesus had told him to buy those things which

they had need of for the feast of the Passover, which fell upon the morrow; or that he should give something to the poor. It was not until afterward that they knew.

When Judas had gone out, Jesus said to the others that now the Son of man was glorified, and that God was glorified in him. He meant that the betrayal by Judas was a part of that glorification which Judas had so desired to see, and which only began now that he was gone to betray his Master to the high priests. Had Judas heard those words, they would have seemed to him ironical.

"Little children," said Jesus tenderly to the eleven faithful ones, "yet a little while I am with you. Ye shall seek me: and as I said unto the Jews, Whither I go, ye cannot come; so now I say to you.

"A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another.

"By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another."

Simon Peter said to him:

"Lord, whither goest thou?"

"Whither I go," Jesus repeated, "thou canst not follow me now; but thou shalt follow me afterward." Then he added:

"All ye shall be offended because of me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad.

"But after I am risen again, I will go before you into Galilee."

The honest face of Peter was shining with love for his Master. He came close to him now, and said:

"Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended."

"Verily I say unto thee," replied Jesus, "that this night, before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice."

Peter insisted that though he should die with the Master, he would never deny him; and all the others said the same. But no man knows what even an hour may bring forth, and Peter and his friends could not have imagined the trials they would pass through that night—before the crowing of the cock in the morning.

It was on this last evening which Jesus spent with his disciples that he established the sacrament which is known as the Lord's Supper. Now that he was going away from them, he wanted to leave with them something, some rite, which they should do in remembrance of him—they feeling that he was actually with them in the spirit while they were doing it.

So, while they were still seated round the table, he took the bread in his hands, and gave thanks to God, and blessed the bread; then he broke it into pieces, and gave a morsel to each of the eleven men, saying as he did so:

"Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me."

Then he took the cup of wine in his hands, and when he had given thanks to God and blessed the wine, he gave it to them to drink, one after another, saying:

"This cup is the new testament of my blood, which is shed for you."

No words could describe the beauty and tenderness of Jesus as he gave to his disciples this first sacrament of the Lord's Supper. They felt, as the morsel of bread touched their lips and as they tasted the flavour of the wine, that the Master's body and blood were really mingled with theirs, and that they were thus a part of him forever.

Among those who have followed the religion of Jesus,

from that far day until now, this sacrament of the bread and the wine has been taken. And those who have received it, at the hands of the ministers of Christ, have felt, as the eleven disciples felt that night, that they were receiving the body and the blood of their Master, which were thus mingled with theirs, and which made them one with him. Behind this belief in the presence of Christ in his sacraments there is a great mystery hidden.

When Jesus had given this sacrament to his disciples, he said to them:

"I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I shall drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom."

During all the time that these men had walked with Jesus, they had never seen him so beautiful as he was this evening—no, not even that night on Mount Hermon, when three of them had beheld him transfigured and shining with a supernatural light. After he had given them the bread and the wine, it seemed to them that he became—not less human and loving than before, but more transcendently spiritual, more like the presence of God Himself among them. His eyes were shining with a tenderness that seemed beyond the tenderness of earth, and there was a thrilling tone in his voice which made their hearts almost stand still to listen.

Jesus told them not to let their hearts be troubled; that in his Father's house were many mansions, and that he went to prepare a place for them, that where he was, there they might be also. And he said: "Whither I go ye know, and the way ye know." For he had told them so many times that he was going to die, and to die by the hands of his enemies, that it seemed to him they *must* understand. But Thomas, who always wanted to have everything explained to him, now said:

"Lord, we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way?"

Jesus said to them:

"I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but by me.

"If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also: and from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him."

For Jesus wanted his disciples to understand that he *was* God, that though he had walked upon the earth as a man among men, he and God were one.

"Lord," said Philip now, "shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us."

Then the Master asked Philip if he had been so long with him, and yet he did not know him? He said that whoever had seen him, *had* seen the Father; that the words which he had spoken to them had not been spoken of himself, but of the Father; and that the works which he had performed were those of God Himself.

Jesus told them that whoever really believed in him should do the same works which he had done—yes, they should do even more than he had done, *because* he had gone to his Father. By this Jesus meant that after he had ascended into heaven, he could help them more than he could on the earth—being nearer to God. This seemed very strange and wonderful to the disciples, who listened to their Master with shining eyes. And he told them that if they should ask anything in his name, he would do it for them. Then he added:

"If ye love me, keep my commandments."

You will remember the new commandments which Jesus had given to his disciples, that they should love one another, and should love their neighbours as themselves.

These men were very sad at the thought that Jesus was going to leave them, even though he was going to his Father, whom they had learned to love for his sake. But he said to them:

"I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you."

He said that in a little while the world would see him no more; but that his disciples should see him, because he would really be *living* still. And because he lived, they should live also.

Then he told them about the Comforter whom God would send to them when he was gone; that this Comforter would be the Holy Ghost, the Spirit of Truth which the world cannot receive, because the world cannot see it with its material eyes; but that the disciples could see the Spirit of Truth, the Holy Ghost, the Comforter, for it would dwell with them and be *in* them.

Jesus said that those who had his commandments and kept them, really loved him, and that those who loved him should be loved by his Father. Jesus himself would love those that were faithful, and would manifest himself to them. At that time the disciples did not fully understand in what *form* the Master would return to them; but his words lighted the flame of hope in their hearts, that though he was going away, they should somewhere, somehow, see him again—before the far-off coming of the kingdom of heaven. Yet the faces of the disciples were still sad, and Jesus said:

"If ye loved me, ye would rejoice, because I said, I go unto the Father: for my Father is greater than I."

It was hard for the eleven men who loved Jesus to realise that even God the Father was greater than their Master, though they could easily believe that God and Jesus were one—because they loved Jesus so much. The idea

of a God made flesh and dwelling among men, charmed them as it has since charmed so many other beautiful souls. Jesus had said that they could only know the Father *through* him; and because he was so real and so sympathetic and so dear to them, they now loved the Father because the Father was one with the Son. They had heard about Jehovah, the Jewish God, all their lives; they had feared and reverenced Him, as the God who spoke to Job out of the whirlwind; but until Jesus came and told them that *he* was that God made flesh, they had never really loved God. For reverence and fear are not the same as love, and that is why Christianity has triumphed over Judaism.

As they looked at the Master now, sitting there before them so gentle and so sad, they tried to be glad that he was going to his Father—because they felt that he wanted so much to go. But they could not be glad, for it did not seem as if they could live without him. Knowing what was in their hearts, he began to teach them again, using one of the beautiful symbols through which he could teach them best. He said:

“I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman.

“I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.”

The eyes of the faithful men were full of tears, so keenly they felt the truth of what he said—that without him they could do nothing.

“If ye abide in me,” said Jesus, “and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.”

At that moment the disciples felt that the only thing they wanted, the only thing they desired to ask of God,

was that Jesus should remain with them on earth—and this they dared not ask. The eyes of every man were fixed upon the face of their Master, so that the eleven seemed to be one being. Jesus said again:

“This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you.

“Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.

“Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.

“Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you.”

The disciples must suddenly have asked themselves if they really remembered all that Jesus had made known to them—the things which he had heard of his Father. He had taught them so much, and they were ignorant men, and had probably written down but few of his sayings. But in the words which he spoke to them next, he summed up his whole teaching:

“These things I command you, that ye love one another.”

He had repeated this so often, that it might be impressed upon their minds. Then he spoke to them again about the future, and all they would have to endure for his sake and the gospel’s. He said:

“They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service.

“And these things will they do unto you, because they have not known the Father, nor me.”

Though the lips of the disciples were silent, their eyes pleaded:

"Master, *must* you go away from us?"

"It is expedient for you that I go away," said Jesus: "for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you. . . .

"A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me, because I go to the Father."

Some of the disciples were puzzled by these words, and they asked each other what Jesus meant. They repeated his words over to themselves, saying:

"What is this that he saith unto us, A little while? We cannot tell what he saith."

For not all the disciples understood the things which Jesus had told them that night; but John understood.

Jesus knew what the puzzled ones wanted to ask him, and he said, reading their thoughts:

"Do ye enquire among yourselves of what I said, A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me?

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, That ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice: and ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned unto joy. . . .

"Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it to you.

"Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full. . . .

"For the Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God.

"I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world: again, I leave the world, and go to the Father."

And those who had been puzzled before now said to Jesus:

"Lo, now speakest thou plainly, and speakest no proverb. Now we are sure that thou knowest all things,

and needest not that any man should ask thee: by this we believe that thou camest forth from God."

Jesus told them that the hour was come when they should be scattered every man to his own, when they should leave their Master alone; but that he would not be alone, because the Father was with him.

Then Jesus lifted up his eyes to heaven and prayed that God would now glorify His Son, that the Son might glorify Him. He said to God: "I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do."

And he prayed for his disciples whom he so much loved, saying: "Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are. . . . They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. . . . As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world. Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; that they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us

"Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovest me before the foundation of the world."

And as the Master prayed thus, with his eyes upraised to heaven, the disciples also felt their hearts going out to the Father whom Jesus loved so much. He was to them no longer the Jehovah who spake to Job out of the whirlwind; but He was indeed the loving Father of Jesus, and through Jesus of themselves, and of all the world who would accept Him as their Father. He was the One who desired to dwell in their hearts, who looked out at them from the eyes of all other men and women and little children. Even those disciples who had been puzzled

before were not puzzled any longer; for at last they understood. Though a time of forgetfulness was to come to them—and in a very little while—at this moment they grasped the meaning of what Jesus meant when he said “My Father.” And as the Master prayed, they lifted their eyes to heaven and prayed with him, wordlessly, following his prayer with the assent of their souls.

This moment was the supreme moment of their lives. They had never been so happy before—they would never be so happy again. It seemed as if Jesus had caught their spirits up in his hands and held them out to his Father, as a parting gift from the world before he left it.

When the prayer was ended, and the eyes of Jesus came back from heaven to the faces of his disciples, he arose from his seat and beckoned them to follow him to the Mount of Olives, where they usually spent the night. In silence they passed out of the city of Jerusalem, and across the brook Cedron, and into the Garden of Gethsemane, at the foot of the Mount of Olives.

CHAPTER XXXIII

THE GARDEN OF GETHSEMANE

Jesus came into the Garden of Gethsemane with his eleven disciples. It was a place which they all knew well, for they had often been there with the Master. Judas also knew the garden.

As they passed into the shadow of the olive-trees, the peace which had shone in the Master's face during the last supper vanished from him, and he was very sad. He took Peter and James and John with him, and leaving the other eight men behind, he said to them:

"Sit ye here, while I shall pray."

Then with the three he went a little way off, and they saw that he was heavy-hearted. His step had lost all its lightness, and when he spoke to them, his voice seemed to come from a long distance. He said:

"My soul is exceeding sorrowful unto death: tarry ye here, and watch with me."

Then he went about a stone's throw away from the men, and fell on his face on the ground. And he prayed to God that if it were possible, the terrible things which he foresaw for the next few hours might pass over him, so that he would not be obliged to suffer them. For Jesus knew that the time was now come when the Son of man would have to endure all the sufferings which the old prophets had foretold for him; that he would be betrayed, and buffeted, and spit upon, and killed by his enemies.

"Abba, Father," he prayed, "all things are possible unto thee; take away this cup from me: nevertheless not what I will, but what thou wilt."

He could not lie there long, he could not pray long, for he was restless and tortured in spirit. He felt terribly alone now, even when praying to the Father, and he yearned for the companionship and comfort of his dearest friends. Rising to his feet, he went back to the place where he had left them—but Peter and James and John were sound asleep! He was astonished. How could they sleep, knowing that this was his hour of anguish? Did they not love him, after all? And he awoke them, saying to Peter:

"Simon, sleepest thou? Couldst thou not watch with me one hour?"

The disciples were ashamed. They sat up and rubbed their heavy eyes, staring at the Master, as he stood there so tall and melancholy in the starlight. They were so drowsy that his words made little impression on them at the moment, though they remembered them afterward with bitter sorrow. Jesus said:

"Watch ye and pray, lest ye enter into temptation. The spirit truly is ready, but the flesh is weak."

Truly, indeed, was the spirit of Jesus ready to do all that God demanded; but he was a man still, and he shrank with human sensitiveness from the physical suffering that was in store for him. It is, perhaps, the human suffering of Jesus which has most endeared him to mankind. Had he not suffered, they could not have realised him as that intimate and human friend—the God made flesh.

Leaving his three disciples to watch with him once more, Jesus went back to the place where he had prayed. And throwing himself again upon the ground, he turned

a second time to his Father in heaven—the God who had given his beloved son a task so hard. And he prayed again, as before, though with even greater intensity:

“O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done.”

During the centuries since that time, the men and women who have tried to follow Jesus have repeated those words when they were in trouble. Of all the sayings of the Master, that is the hardest to repeat sincerely: “Father, thy will be done.” We say it in the Lord’s Prayer; but few have grasped its meaning, and fewer still have really meant it when they spoke the words. But Jesus could say it with sincerity and with full knowledge of its import, even when it led him to the greatest suffering of which the human being is capable—both of the body and the mind.

When he had thus prayed again to his Father, repeating “Thy will be done,” he went back to the three men whom he had left under the olive-trees. Surely this time they would have watched with him and prayed.

But when he came to the place, instead of finding the three in prayer, he saw them again extended upon the ground—sound asleep. Whether or not their spirits were ready, surely *their* flesh was weak.

When he awakened them a second time, they knew not what to say to him. They had meant to watch and to pray that God would keep them from temptation; but the hour was late, and they were tired. Before they had realised it, their heads had fallen upon their breasts, the whispering of the wind through the trees had seemed a lullaby, and they had sunk upon the ground in a deep sleep. Whether or not they dreamed, we do not know; but when they heard the voice of Jesus calling them again, they sat up and gazed at him in shame and confu-

sion. Perhaps God permitted them to sleep, that Jesus might learn that in the hour of sorrow there is no real comforter except God. Every soul in deep trouble has to learn that lesson.

Jesus left Peter and James and John, and went away the third time. He was more sorrowful than ever, for now he knew that he was utterly alone—save for the Father. And he realised that every other soul, in its last depth of pain, is also alone with God. The grief of all the world rolled over him in a great flood, as he lay there on the cold ground. He was going to die in order to show the world where comfort might be found—but would the world seek that comfort? If even his own disciples could not watch with him in this hour of his trial, what hope was there for lesser men? He was now resigned to death; but one who loved humanity as Jesus loved it could not be resigned to the pain of humanity.

What Jesus endured during that last prayer is too terrible to write—almost too terrible to think. It is possible that he suffered more in that hour alone than he suffered the following day upon the cross. We are told that in his agony he prayed more earnestly than before, and that his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground. Words cannot express such grief, nor can the mind of a young person imagine it, nor his heart endure it.

But when the anguish of Jesus was deepest, there appeared to him an angel from heaven, giving him strength. Was it the same angel that had come to Mary the Virgin, in her little room that night so long ago, to tell her that she had been chosen by God to be the mother of the future Christ? Or was it the great angel Raphael, who is said to be full of pity for the world? We do not know. Men like to think of that angel hovering over

Jesus; and many of the world's great painters have tried to picture him, wiping away the tears from the Master's eyes, and soothing him with tender sympathy. Only an angel could understand Jesus. The heavenly visitor did not leave him until he had conquered his human shrinking from a death of pain, and had risen above his grief at the betrayal of Judas, and had left in the care of God the woes of that humanity with which he had lived for more than thirty years.

When Jesus arose from the ground the third time, he was strong. The Messiah was ready for his glorification by death, at the hands of those Jews whom he had sought to bring to a knowledge of God. Perhaps, as he had lain there on the ground before the appearance of the angel, he had had a sudden and terrible vision of the future. Perhaps he had seen the crimes which would be committed in the name of that religion he had founded; how men would misunderstand his teaching; how they would turn the living faith which he had tried to give them into the formal dead letter of a creed almost as cold as that of the Jews. But with the coming of the angel, and with the heavenly strength the angel brought him, he could now rise above everything—until death should give him freedom.

When he came back the third time to his tired friends, he no longer thought of himself at all; he only thought with pity of their weakness, and of all *they* would have to suffer during the coming hours, and ever thereafter in memory. And he said to Peter and James and John:

“Sleep on now, and take your rest: it is enough, the hour is come; behold, the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners.”

But there was to be no sleep for the disciples that night. After a moment, Jesus spoke again:

"Rise up, let us go; lo, he that betrayeth me is at hand."

Even with the words, they heard a sound of footsteps, a murmur of voices, a clanking of weapons. Looking in the direction from which the sounds came, they saw the flickering lights of many lanterns, moving over the ground in a wide, irregular semicircle, as if those who bore them were searching for something.

The three disciples leaped to their feet, and the other eight, who had been a short distance away, came running. They had been awakened from sleep by the sound of the approaching multitude.

As the crowd of men came closer, by the light of the stars and of the lanterns, the disciples could see that most of them were ruffians. They had swords and staves in their hands, and they had come from the chief priests and the scribes and the elders. But who was that at their head—the man who seemed to be leading them? The faithful disciples were amazed when they saw Judas Iscariot. His face was terrible in the starlight, for there was on it a strange expression—half triumph, half flickering shame. He turned away a moment, and those who were nearest heard him say to the men behind him:

"Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is he; take him, and lead him away safely."

The crowd surrounded the place where Jesus stood with his friends. It would have been impossible for him to escape without violence, even had he wished to escape.

In the uncertain light, the ruffians peered into one face and another, not knowing which of the men was the Master from Nazareth. But Judas went boldly up to Jesus and kissed him, saying in a loud voice which could be heard by the whole crowd:

"Master, Master!"

"Judas," said Jesus, "betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss?"

The look of mingled love and reproach in the Master's eyes was more than the faithless disciple could bear. He drew back, and hid himself behind his followers. At that moment Jesus was very strong.

"Whom seek ye?" he said, turning to the men from Jerusalem, who now pressed closer around him.

"Jesus of Nazareth," replied a dozen voices, hoarse with excitement.

"I am he," said the Master, quietly.

To the disciples who stood by, it seemed that his whole person expanded, that a strange power went out from him; and John says that the men who were near Jesus sank backward and fell upon the ground.

"Whom seek ye?" he asked, a second time.

"Jesus of Nazareth," they answered.

"I have told you that I am he," said Jesus. "If therefore ye seek me, let these go their way."

He made a motion toward his disciples, meaning that the ruffians were to take him only, and let his friends go free. But they did not want his friends—they only wanted him. The disciples saw this, and when they realised that the crowd meant violence to their Master, they said to him:

"Lord, shall we smite with the sword?" For the men from Galilee had two swords with them.

We do not know what answer Jesus made, if he made any; for at that moment the rough men laid hands upon him.

This was too much for Peter to endure. He drew his sword and smote a servant of the high priest, named Malchus, and cut off his right ear.

Jesus placed his hand upon the servant's wound and healed it. Then he said to Peter:

"Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword."

"Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?"

"But how then shall the Scriptures be fulfilled, that thus he must die."

Peter put away his sword, as the Master had commanded him.

Then Jesus said to the chief priests, the captains of the Temple and the elders, who had also come with Judas and the brutal crowd:

"Are ye come out, as against a thief, with swords and with staves to take me? When I was daily with you in the Temple, ye stretched forth no hand against me: but this is your hour, and the power of darkness."

For reply, the ruffians bound Jesus, and took him.

When the disciples saw their Master thus, bound like any malefactor and helpless in the hands of his enemies, their courage vanished. It seemed to them that their hearts were broken; but the more faithful of them did not know that what they were yet to suffer would make their present trouble seem as nothing. Casting a last despairing glance at Jesus, they turned and fled, pushing their way through the crowd which made no effort to detain them. Where did they go? We do not know, save for two of them, Peter and John, who followed after their Master—but not too near.

As Jesus was hustled along toward Jerusalem in the midst of this ruffianly multitude, there also followed after him a certain young man dressed only in a linen cloth, thrown hastily around his body, as if he had

arisen in the night and sought Jesus—perhaps to warn him. We do not know the young man's name, but many have believed that it was Luke, the physician, who afterward was numbered among the apostles.

The ruffians, not knowing who the young man was or what he wanted, laid hold upon him, catching in their hands the linen cloth which was his only garment. But he pulled himself away from them, leaving only the linen cloth in their grasp, and fled away into the darkness of the night. And the crowd, with Jesus in their midst, hurried on toward Jerusalem.

Where Judas was now, we do not know. He had done his work, he had won his reward of thirty pieces of silver—the price of the Messiah of the Jews in the priestly market of Jerusalem. The feelings of Judas at this hour are almost unimaginable. Was he still following behind the crowd, his treachery and disgrace hidden among the shadows of the night? We know that he did not meet any of the other disciples, or they would have told us so. It is more likely that he plunged away alone into the darkness, trying to elude even the glances of the stars, which are very clear in the country of Palestine, and which must have pierced his soul with their coldly critical regard. Judging by what he did in the morning, we may believe that he wandered about all night, sleepless, tortured, perhaps even praying to the God whom he had outraged, that he would save Jesus from the cruelty of the Jews.

CHAPTER XXXIV

IN THE HANDS OF HIS ENEMIES

When Peter and John saw Jesus in the hands of that band of ruffians in the Garden of Gethsemane, they knew not what to do. Why did he not manifest his power? they asked each other. Why did he not call upon God to free him? Surely the Father would come to the rescue of the Son? All the other disciples had fled—John did not even know where his brother James had gone.

They could see, in the distance ahead of them, the flickering lights of the lanterns which the ruffians carried; they heard now and then a sharp voice which seemed to give commands, and once or twice the strains of a ribald song, for there were soldiers in the crowd. Where were they going? What would they do to the Master? Though Peter and John kept well behind, out of sight, yet they were near enough to see and to follow the throng. This was easy, for it was so late at night that the country roads were quite deserted, and even when they entered the city of Jerusalem they met almost no one.

As the crowd ahead made a sharp turn, John said to Peter:

“Look, they are taking Jesus to the house of Annas!”

You will remember that Annas was the old high priest, the predecessor and father-in-law of Caiaphas; and though he was no longer in authority, yet his influence among the Jews was even stronger than that of the pres-

ent high priest. John shuddered when he thought of his Master at the mercy of that old bigot.

The two men saw Jesus taken into the house of Annas. They waited in the street opposite, hiding in a doorway. But they did not have to wait long, for after a few minutes the door of the house of Annas opened again, and they saw Jesus pass out over the threshold, between two of the high priest's servants. His hands were bound, as if he had been a thief; and as the light from the lantern hung over the doorway fell upon his face, the two disciples clutched each other, with pity for their Master. How white and sad he was! They longed to throw themselves at his feet—but they dared not show their faces. All the courage was gone out of them. They did not even know what hour of the night it was, for the snatches of troubled sleep which they had taken in the garden while Jesus prayed had confused their minds. They seemed to be walking in a nightmare where everything was unreal, especially the white face of the Master.

They dared not even whisper to each other, for they were too near the crowd. Their hearts beat so loud that it seemed as if their enemies must hear them; and when the throng started down the street, they came so near to the doorway in which Peter and John were hidden that they nearly touched them in passing.

Following the crowd again, the two disciples came to the palace of the high priest Caiaphas. There they saw Jesus disappear into the palace, with those highest in authority and with the servants of the high priests.

Now John was the only one of the disciples (except Judas) who was known to the high priest and his household, and when he came to the palace of Caiaphas he went in, after his Master, leaving Peter outside the door. But he could not follow Jesus any farther than the main

hall, for Jesus had been taken to the council-chamber, and John was left with the officers and the servants of the household.

Then he went out to the woman-servant who kept the door, and asked if he might bring in his friend, and the girl let Peter come in with John.

Peter was troubled by the way in which this damsel looked at him. She was a very smart maid, being door-keeper of the high priest, and she spoke in a supercilious way of Jesus. Even the women-servants of the high priest assumed an air of superiority over other mortals, especially when their master was not present. Peter, a simple Galilean, felt embarrassed in the presence of this smartly attired domestic. Suddenly she turned to him, saying:

"Art thou not one of this man's disciples?" Her tone, when she spoke of Jesus as "this man," was offensive in the extreme.

Now Peter was overwrought with anxiety for both his Master and himself, and he did not know what was going to happen next. He felt that at any moment he and John might also be bound, like Jesus, and taken into that terrible council-chamber.

So, when the maid-servant of the high priest, with her superior tone, asked him if he were not also a disciple of "this man," Peter answered:

"I am not."

The other servants and officers who stood there in the hall had made a fire of coals, for the night was cold. And as they warmed themselves around the fire, Peter came and stood with them, warming himself. The servants all stared at him; and another maid, in appearance much like the smart doorkeeper, now said to Peter:

"Art thou not also one of his disciples?"

"I am not," answered Peter, sullenly, a second time denying his Master.

Then one of the men-servants of the high priest, a kinsman of that Malchus whose ear Peter had cut off with his sword in the Garden of Gethsemane, said to the unhappy disciple:

"Did I not see thee in the garden with him?"

And another said: "Surely thou art one of them, for thy speech betrayeth thee."

This made Peter angry, for he was very sensitive about his Galilean accent, which had been much laughed at in Jerusalem. And he began to curse and to swear, saying:

"I know not the man."

Immediately the cock crowed, for it was nearly morning.

When Peter heard the crowing of the cock, he started as if some one had struck him, for he remembered the words which Jesus had said: "Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice." Leaving John and the servants and officers still standing around the fire, he went out of doors alone in the grey dawn and wept bitterly.

Peter had not meant to deny the Master; he told himself now that he would gladly die for Jesus; but the contemptuous tone of the pretty maid-servant as she had said "this man," and the general air of cynical superiority in the hall of the high priest's palace, and especially that reference to his Galilean accent, had been too much for Peter's loyalty. Not even the presence of John had kept him from denying that he was a disciple of Jesus. He wondered now what his fellow-disciple thought of him!

The Bible does not tell us whether or not John came out to Peter and comforted him; but we like to think that

he did. Peter never denied his momentary disloyalty. In after years he frankly confessed it—confessed that he, whom Jesus had called the foundation-stone of his church, had, in the hour of temptation, forgotten his Master's trust. For a moment, alone there in the grey dawn, it must have seemed to Peter himself that he was almost as false as Judas. It was a bitter hour for him. When he realised what he had done, a terrible desire to see Jesus rushed over him. He wondered what they were doing to the Master in that council-room, whither he could not go?

When Jesus had gone into the council-chamber, he had found assembled there the priests and scribes and elders, with Caiaphas. At last the time had come for which the high priest had schemed and worked, and for which he had also bribed Judas Iscariot for the sake of the little help that he could give. The high priest now had Jesus in his power.

You must understand that, although the Jews were not rulers in their own land which was under the sway of the Romans, in all matters of strictly religious import the Romans did not interfere with the authority of the high priests. To have done so would have provoked riots and revolutions. This policy is still adopted by all European empires in dealing with those oriental races which are under their rule. The Jewish high priests had not the legal right to carry out a sentence of death; but if, in solemn council, they pronounced a man guilty of blasphemy against the Jewish religion, which blasphemy was punishable by death according to the Jewish law, the Roman authorities would carry out the sentence.

Having failed to entangle Jesus with the Roman authorities that time in the Temple, when they had ques-

tioned him as to whether it was lawful to give tribute to Cæsar, their only hope was to pronounce him guilty of blasphemy against the Jewish faith, and then to hand him over to Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor, with a demand that he be executed. To this end they were now provided with false witnesses, who were ready to swear to anything, no matter how absurd, which would cause Jesus to be condemned for blasphemy.

Let us look into that council-chamber in the high priest's palace—which the two disciples could not enter.

This Jewish council of priests, scribes, and elders was called the sanhedrim. It was the Supreme Court of the Jews. The members, who were many, sat in a wide semi-circle, with the high priest Caiaphas—president of the sanhedrim—in the centre of the curve. Opposite Caiaphas, at a little distance, stood the accused man Jesus, bound and at the mercy of his questioners, all of whom were determined to condemn him.

It was still some time before daylight, and the large room was lighted by lamps. The face of every member of the sanhedrim was set in rigid lines, while his eyes blazed with determination to wreak vengeance at last upon the daring Galilean who had called them hypocrites and perverters of the law.

The high priest began by questioning Jesus in regard to his doctrines and his disciples. What had he taught the people? Caiaphas asked, and what secret doctrine had he taught to his own friends?

"I spake openly to the world," Jesus answered; "I ever taught in the synagogues, and in the temple, whither the Jews always resort; and in secret have I said nothing. Why askest thou me? Ask them which heard me, what I have said unto them: behold they know what I said."

Jesus had spoken gently; yet one of the officers of the

Temple who stood by, struck him with the palm of his hand, saying roughly:

"Answerest thou the high priest so?"

"If I have spoken evil," replied Jesus, with great dignity, "bear witness of the evil; but if well, why smitest thou me?"

It was then that they called the false witnesses; but though many testified against him, there was nothing in what they said which could prove Jesus worthy of death, even under the rigid Jewish law. But at last they found two witnesses who declared:

"This fellow said, I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to build it in three days."

The high priest arose in his seat, in the middle of the semicircle. He looked very tall and powerful, and the lamps cast a pale yellow light over his face, making him look like a statue cut in ivory. The assembled elders and scribes and priests gazed at Caiaphas with admiration, as he stood there looking so tall and judicial.

"Answerest thou nothing?" said Caiaphas to Jesus, when the witnesses had testified. "What is this, which these witness against thee?"

But Jesus would not reply; because, as has been so well said, a lie that is half the truth is ever the meanest of lies, and when the Master had declared that he could rebuild the temple of God in three days, he had referred to the temple of his body—the dwelling-place of the Most High.

When the high priest saw that Jesus would make no answer to this insincere accusation, he said to him:

"I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God."

"Thou hast said," replied Jesus, looking Caiaphas full in the face. "Nevertheless I say unto thee, Here-

after shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven."

When the high priest heard the answer of Jesus, he rent his garment, which was a sign among the Jews when something was too terrible to be endured. And he cried to the assembled members of the sanhedrim:

"He hath spoken blasphemy; what further need have we of witnesses? Behold, now ye have heard his blasphemy."

It seems strange to us that the Jews, who had been waiting so long for their Messiah, should declare that Messiah guilty of blasphemy against the Jewish religion when he implied that he was the Son of man, a name they had for the Redeemer for whom they pretended—and possibly believed—that they were waiting. But such was the way of the Jewish hierarchy.

"What think ye?" cried the high priest now, looking at the assembled company. And as with one voice these cruel councillors answered:

"He is guilty of death."

Then all their long-controlled malice was let loose. Their anger and hatred of Jesus, which had made them wretched for months whenever they had thought of him and of his noble arraignment of their own hypocrisy, now found a vent. Some of them even went up and spat in the face of the Master, as he stood there alone and quiet and dignified in the midst of his powerful enemies. Others pushed him back and forth, and still others held a scarf over his eyes, while their neighbours struck him with their hands, saying mockingly:

"Prophesy unto us, thou Christ, who was it that smote thee?"

If they had done nothing worse to Jesus, the shame of that scene in the council-chamber of the high priest,

where the most dignified men of the nation did and permitted such things, would be a blot upon the Jewish race forever. But these insults and blows were but the commencement of what the priests and scribes and elders intended to do with Jesus, the gentle Master from Galilee, whose new law was that men should love one another; whose crime was that men loved him better than they loved the high priests; whose blasphemy was that he called himself the Son of man.

Having convicted him of that blasphemy, according to their law, they prepared to conduct him to the Roman governor, Pontius Pilate, whom they believed (for political reasons) that they could mould to their cruel will. The whole company of priests and scribes and elders, with Jesus bound in their midst, left the palace of the high priest, and sought the judgment hall of Pontius Pilate. It was now day, and they exchanged the lamplight of the council-chamber for the light of the morning sun in the streets of Jerusalem.

It was at this time that a terrible thing happened. As it was still too early in the morning to see Pontius Pilate at the governor's hall of judgment, the priests and elders must have stopped for a few minutes in the Temple, leaving Jesus bound in the hands of the soldiers.

Judas Iscariot came to the Temple. He had been wandering about all night, and now, with the coming of the daylight, he returned to the scene of his treachery. Judas had seen Jesus standing bound in the custody of the soldiers, and he now learned that his former Master had been condemned to death by the sanhedrim. The false disciple was on the verge of madness. That sight of the Master, alone with the insolent servants of those enemies who had condemned him to death, was too much for the faithless friend who had once loved him. For Judas had

seen other Roman executions in Judæa, and he knew what was in store for Jesus.

Trembling in every limb, his face livid with grief and terror at the part which he himself had played in this tragedy, Judas sought out the chief priests and elders as they waited there in the Temple. And he tried to return to them the thirty pieces of silver, the price of his own perfidy, saying in a voice hoarse with horror:

"I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood."

But the rich priests hardly deigned to look at the paltry sum of money which had been the price of Judas's dishonour. They were too much absorbed in what they had still to do at the hall of judgment, to give more than a passing glance at this cheap tool which they had used and thrown away. And when Judas declared his penitence, they merely shrugged their shoulders, saying carelessly:

"What is that to us? See thou to that."

Then Judas, when he realised that they would not take back the money, flung it down on the pavement of the Temple; and he went out again into the streets of Jerusalem, which would be horrible to him forevermore.

The voice of Jesus rang in his ears, as he had heard it the night before when he had kissed the Master: "Judas, betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss?" He knew that he would hear that voice until his death; knew that he would have before his eyes as long as he lived, the sad and loving and reproachful eyes of Jesus, as he had seen them the night before in the light of the lanterns, and as he had seen them again this morning, when the Master stood bound and condemned in the hands of the soldiers who would soon lead him to his death. And the heart of Judas broke.

He could no longer endure his life. His only question was—how he could quickest die. He found a rope, and hurried with it to a lonely place that he knew just outside the city. And there he hanged himself.

The false disciple had gone by his own act to the judgment of the God whom he had outraged. This terrible thing took place while Jesus was waiting to be conducted to the hall of Pontius Pilate, so that the treacherous disciple found death before his Master found it. It was a day of death.

When Jesus with his enemies came to the Roman hall of judgment, the Jews would not go in. To have done so, would have made them unclean and unable to celebrate the feast of the Passover—according to their law.

So Pontius Pilate, the governor, came outside the hall and talked with the Jews in the open air. When he saw Jesus bound, and standing before him, he was surprised that a man with such a gentle and beautiful face should be brought to him as a malefactor. And he said to the priests, the scribes and the elders:

“What accusation bring ye against this man?”

“If he were not a malefactor,” they answered, “we would not have delivered him up unto thee.”

Then they began to accuse Jesus before the Roman governor, saying:

“We found this fellow perverting the nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Caesar, saying that he himself is Christ a King.”

Pilate was annoyed at being called upon to mix himself in the affair. He had already heard of Jesus; and if, as was asserted, the young Master had by his teaching weakened the hold of the Jewish law upon the people, so much the better for the Roman authorities. For the Jew-

ish law, with its bigotry and minute distinctions, was a never-ending source of perplexity to the Roman governor. Pilate himself had failed in his attempt to understand these people whom he had been sent to govern, and it seemed to him that they were always trying to involve him in needless trouble, and to entangle him in their tiresome quarrels. So now, when they accused Jesus of seeking to pervert the nation, and turned him over to Pilate to be punished, the governor said to them, impatiently:

“Take ye him, and judge him according to your law.”

But Jesus had already been judged according to the law of the sanhedrim, and had been pronounced a blasphemer worthy of death. And the priests and elders now persisted in their demand that Pilate should take a hand in the affair; for, as they said to him:

“It is not lawful for us to put any man to death.”

Pilate went back into the hall of judgment, and gave orders that Jesus should be brought to him there. The two were now face to face, the portly and overfed Roman governor, weary of his duties in Jerusalem among a people who hated him, and the slender young Galilean prophet, with the refined and sweet face—so different to the mass of his countrymen. The quiet manners of Jesus made a deep impression upon Pilate, who was accustomed to deal with the talkative and ever-wrangling Jews. He looked at Jesus long and steadily, wondering what he should do with him. Finally he said—being obliged to say something:

“Art thou the King of the Jews?”

Jesus answered:

“Sayest thou this thing of thyself, or did others tell it thee of me?”

Pilate was offended by this reply of Jesus, offended

that a Jewish prophet should assume that he took sufficient interest in the aspirations of this people to have an idea of his own about one of them. And he said to Jesus:

"Am I a Jew?" which was the same as saying, "What do I know about your petty quarrels?" And he continued: "Thine own nation and the chief priests have delivered thee unto me: What hast thou done?"

"My kingdom is not of this world," said Jesus, answering Pilate's first question as to whether he was the King of the Jews. "If my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence."

"Art thou a king then?" asked Pilate. He was becoming more and more interested in this unusual prisoner, who was charged with making himself out a king. Surely he looked like one.

"Thou sayest that I am a king," replied Jesus. "To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice."

"What is truth?" asked Pilate, with a touch of philosophic pride. He was weary of the Greek philosophers and their jargon, as he called it, and here was a Jew using the same abstract terms, which to the skeptical Roman had no meaning. Jesus now appeared to him as a harmless dreamer, and he was less inclined than ever to do him harm. He went out again to the Jews, and said to them:

"I find in him no fault at all."

But the priests and scribes and elders were more fierce than ever, for they saw that Pilate was not willing to lend himself to their scheme. Without his consent they could

do nothing. And they now began to arraign Jesus more severely, saying:

“He stirreth up the people, teaching throughout all Jewry, beginning from Galilee to this place.”

“Is the man a Galilean?” asked Pilate, eagerly. An idea had occurred to him by which he might escape this troublesome business.

“He is of Galilee,” replied the Jews.

Then Pilate left them, and going back to Jesus in the judgment hall, he gave orders that the prisoner should be conducted to Herod, the Tetrarch of Galilee, who was in Jerusalem at that time. When Pilate saw Jesus led away, he breathed a sigh of relief. He did not know how soon he should see him again.

Now Herod was very glad when he heard that Jesus had been sent to him for judgment, for he had long desired to see him. The rumours of the miracles performed by the Galilean had appealed to his vivid imagination. When Jesus was brought before Herod, the Tetrarch asked him many questions touching his miraculous works and his teaching. But Jesus would answer nothing; for he knew that all this formality of questioning, all this sending of him from one tribunal to another, was a mere mockery. He had been condemned by the sanhedrim, the members of which would manage, somehow, to have their sentence of death carried out. And Jesus was already very weary.

He longed for the death which was now certain, he longed to be at rest in the bosom of the Father whom he loved.

As Jesus stood there before Herod, the priests and scribes who had followed him to the palace vehemently accused him, charging him again with seeking to pervert the nation, and with stirring up revolt against the pay-

ment of tribute to Cæsar. For the Jews now realised that their only hope of getting Jesus killed was by making out that he was a danger to the authorities.

But Herod refused to take them seriously. And he did not take Jesus seriously, either. Was this gentle-faced Galilean, who made no answer either to the questions of the Tetrarch nor to the accusations of the priests, really the man about whom so much noise had been made? It seemed preposterous. If Jesus had brought a brazen serpent to life, or had caused roses to spring out of the marble pavement of the palace, it might have made some impression upon this superstitious and degenerate descendant of the Herods. But a man who merely stood in silence before his accusers, a miracle-worker who did not even try to unbind his own hands—what folly was this! So thought the Tetrarch, to whose unsteady shoulder Pontius Pilate had sought to shift his burden of judgment.

And Herod and his men of war mocked Jesus. And arraying him in a gorgeous robe, befitting his title of King of the Jews, the Tetrarch sent him back to Pilate.

When the Roman governor heard that Jesus was again in the judgment hall, he knew not what to do. As he was considering the matter, and had sat down again upon the judgment seat, his wife sent a messenger to him, saying:

“Have thou nothing to do with that just man: for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of him.”

This message increased the anxiety of Pilate; for, like many men, he knew that women are sometimes gifted with an intuition more true and subtle than the cold judgment of their brothers.

There was only one expedient he could think of, and he now determined to try it. It was the custom of the

Roman authorities in Judæa, at the annual feast of the Passover, to seek the good will of the Jews by releasing some Jewish prisoner whom the Jews themselves should select, as a kind of peace offering in honour of the sacred season. He would offer to release Jesus. And going out again to the assembled people, he said to them:

“Ye have brought this man unto me, as one that perverteth the people; and, behold, I, having examined him before you, have found no fault in this man touching those things whereof ye accuse him.

“No, nor yet Herod: for I sent you to him, and, lo, nothing worthy of death is done unto him.

“I will therefore chastise him, and release him. Ye have a custom, that I should release unto you one at the Passover: will ye therefore that I release unto you the King of the Jews?”

But the priests and scribes and elders were not to be baulked in this way. It seemed to them that Pilate mocked at them, for they could not know that he was sick at heart. And they protested violently at the suggestion, crying:

“Away with this man, and release unto us Barabbas.”

Now Barabbas was a Jew who had been cast into prison by the Romans for causing a *real* sedition in the city, which had resulted in murder. Barabbas was very popular among the Jews, who, like most subject races, were nearly all seditious in their hearts, whatever concessions to the power of their conquerors their judgment or their fear might dictate. Pilate now sought to appease the Jews by promising to release Barabbas in honour of the Passover. Then he spoke again of Jesus; but they only cried, louder than before:

“Crucify him! Crucify him!”

“Why, what evil hath he done?” demanded Pilate,

for the third time. “I have found no cause of death in him: I will therefore chastise him and let him go.”

But again the terrible cry, “*Crucify him! Crucify him!*” arose from a hundred throats. And looking down from his high place above the crowd, the Roman governor saw a tossing sea of upturned human faces—a sea whose every little wave seemed to be a dark eye blazing with the light of hatred.

The perplexity of Pilate increased. Jesus was falsely charged with calling himself “King of the Jews”; and for the Roman governor to show favour to one who bore such a title in Cæsar’s dominions, might compromise himself. Already some of the acts of Pilate in Judæa had been severely criticised in Rome.

Partly to gain time, we suppose, and in order to evade if possible the demand of the Jews that the Galilean be crucified, Pilate commanded that Jesus should be scourged, and to that end he turned him over to the ruffianly soldiers under his command.

The scene that followed was revolting beyond description. The very thought of it has, for nearly nineteen hundred years, aroused the wrath of the world against the Jews who caused it, and against Pilate who permitted it. The ribald Roman soldiers cruelly whipped Jesus. Then they platted a crown of thorns and put the torturing thing upon his head; they dressed him in a purple robe, and put a reed in his hand for a sceptre—to ridicule his title of King of the Jews. And as the soldiers filed past him, they struck him and spit upon him, crying mockingly:

“Hail, King of the Jews! Hail, King of the Jews!”

Then Pilate again brought Jesus to the open-air tribunal, before the Jews who were still assembled outside the judgment-hall. He was dressed in the purple robe

and the crown of thorns, and on his pallid face were drops of blood. Not a word he uttered now, and his look of resigned dignity in suffering only made the Jews more determined that he should die.

"Behold the man!" cried Pontius Pilate, his voice hoarse with emotion and with anger at these terrible people whom he had been sent to govern, but who seemed now to be governing him.

"*Crucify him! Crucify him!*" The cry came from all directions, for besides the priests and the scribes and the elders, there were many others in that throng who had resented the name of hypocrite which Jesus had bestowed on them.

Pilate was now thoroughly excited. He cried to the Jews below:

"Take ye him, and crucify him yourselves; for I find no fault in him."

The Jews answered, implacably:

"We have a law, and by our law he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God."

When Pilate heard those words he was more afraid than ever. There was certainly something godlike about this man, who had not even cried out under the lashes of the soldiers, and who now stood in that crown of thorns and that burlesque purple robe, as if he bore indeed the royal title with which they mocked him. And Pilate went back still another time into the judgment-hall, and called Jesus to him.

"Whence art thou?" he asked, in desperation and bewilderment.

But Jesus gave him no answer. His thoughts were with his Father, and all this medley of faces and of voices, of idle questions and of useless goings back and forth from judgment-hall to street-tribunal, seemed like the

movements of figures in a dream. Only the lashes of the soldiers had seemed real.

When Pilate saw that Jesus did not answer, he said to him:

"Speakest thou not unto me? Knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and have power to release thee?"

Pilate could not understand a man, in such a strait as this man was in, who made no effort to save himself from death.

"Thou couldst have no power at all against me," Jesus said, "except it were given thee from above: therefore he that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin."

Then Pilate went out still another time to the Jews, seeking yet for some means to save Jesus. But the Jews would not even listen to him. They cried:

"If thou let this man go, thou art not Cæsar's friend: whoever maketh himself a king speaketh against Cæsar."

In the whole history of the world there were never words spoken more contemptible than those. Their insincerity was worthy of the source from which they came—the corrupt and worldly Jewish priesthood, who hated Jesus because his power over the people threatened their own fat privileges, and who now took advantage of the weakness of Cæsar's governor, whose rule they themselves loathed and secretly execrated, making a weapon of their own pretended loyalty to the Romans, in order to compass the death of a man who had never spoken one word against Cæsar.

The hatred and contempt with which the Christian world has regarded the Jews as a race is wrong. It was not the Jewish people who killed Jesus, it was the Jewish priesthood. Yet, in the face of this scene of hypocrisy, one can at least *understand* the Christian's prejudice

against the Jew. We should do all we can to overcome that prejudice, because it is unfair; the Jews of our day did not kill Jesus. Yet there may be a racial justice, as well as an individual justice; and when contemplating this scene—even through the mists of the ages—we involuntarily clench our hands with anger. To kill Jesus was bad enough, but to kill him through a pretended loyalty to Caesar was a climax of hypocrisy which stands without rival in the history of earth's abominations.

The appeal to the hidden cowardice of the imperial governor served its ruthless purpose. Pilate foresaw the report that would be sent to Rome: that he had favoured a Jew who sought to usurp the power of the Emperor. The timid man was afraid of losing his office!

"Away with him! Crucify him!" still cried those terrible voices from below. And when Pilate, in one last effort, demanded:

"Shall I crucify your king?"

The chief priests answered:

"We have no king but Cæsar."

When Pilate saw that all further effort to save Jesus was hopeless, and that he would be obliged to quell a riot if he persisted, he called for a basin of water. Then he washed his hands in the presence of the multitude, saying:

"I am innocent of the blood of this just person: see ye to it."

Then the priests and the scribes and the other Jews answered:

"His blood be upon us, and on our children."

And Pilate delivered Jesus to be crucified.

CHAPTER XXXV

THE DEATH OF JESUS

I have now to tell you the saddest story ever told—the story of the crucifixion of Jesus.

When Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor, finally yielded to the demands of the Jews that Jesus should be put to death, he delivered the Master into the hands of his brutal Roman soldiers, with orders to crucify him. The death upon the cross was the most shameful of all deaths, according to Roman ideas, and it was reserved for slaves and highway robbers, and such other low-born malefactors as were not considered even good enough to die by the sword. That was why the high priests had demanded this death for Jesus.

After beating him, and spitting upon him, and mocking him as the pretended "King of the Jews," dressed in a gorgeous robe and with a reed for a sceptre, the Roman soldiers clothed the Master again in his own garments, and led him forth to be crucified.

It was a sombre day. Already, before the hour of noon, dark clouds had gathered in the sky, shutting out the light of the sun. It seemed to the few faithful ones who watched from a distance, that Earth herself was in mourning for what she was obliged to witness of the cruelty of mankind.

The Roman authorities had in their prison that morning two thieves who were condemned to crucifixion, and it was in company with these outcasts of society that Jesus

was to die. The soldiers led them out together—Jesus and the two thieves.

There had been prepared in the courtyard of the prison, three rough crosses of wood, on which the prisoners were to be executed, and each of them was commanded to bear his own cross to Golgotha—the place selected for their death.

The two thieves, strong and brutal men, had no difficulty in carrying their heavy crosses upon their bent backs; but even from the start the soldiers saw that Jesus was hardly strong enough for that grim burden. The scourging he had already received had weakened him. Nevertheless, they laid the cross upon him, as they had laid the other two crosses upon the backs of the thieves. The procession started, Jesus in front, and the two thieves following behind.

They had gone only a little way, a few rods perhaps, when Jesus stumbled and fell. The soldiers cursed. If Jesus could not carry his cross, what were they to do? The soldiers themselves would not carry it; that would compromise their dignity as Romans—the ruling race.

When the Master staggered to his feet again, the four soldiers looked at him—not with pity, but with the tolerant contempt of muscular men for one less physically strong than themselves. They held a consultation. Meanwhile the two thieves halted, their crosses still upon their backs. Even they were glad of a moment's rest.

The soldiers saw a man walking toward them, one Simon, a Cyrenean, who was coming into Jerusalem from the country. They called out to him roughly:

“Simon! Come you and bear the cross of the King of the Jews.”

Casting one quick and pitying glance at the Master, who stood still and pallid at the head of the terrible pro-



Bearing the Cross

cession, Simon came forward without a word of protest, and lifting upon his strong shoulders the cross of Jesus, he started for Golgotha. The Master walked slowly beside Simon, while the noisy Roman soldiers brought up the rear, keeping ever in their sight the two thieves.

The high priests, and the scribes, and the elders, grim and triumphant now, wagging their heads with satisfaction at the work they had accomplished, walked in front, turning now and then to feast their eyes upon the pale face of the man they hated. They would not have been content that Jesus should merely die in agony, they wanted to watch his death themselves. They yearned to behold him nailed to the infamous cross—he who had dared to say that he was the Messiah!

A throng of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and of those who had come up to the city for the feast of the Passover, also followed. Some of them, especially those who had known Jesus in the north, were shocked and grieved; others were merely curious. There were in this crowd a number of persons who had been healed of their infirmities by the Master, and these followed him wailing.

There were also many women in the throng, and they cried and sobbed, calling to Jesus to save himself—for it seemed to them that one who had done so much for others could do something for himself. Some of these women, in their grief and excitement, came so near to Jesus that they almost touched him. The sight of their sorrow was pitiful to the Master, and he turned to them and said, in sad and moving tones:

“Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children.”

And he told them that the days were coming in which childless women would consider themselves blessed because they had no little ones to suffer; that the people in those

times would call upon the mountains to fall on them, and the hills to cover them, so terribly would they be persecuted.

When the women heard this, they only wailed the louder; and they beat their breasts, praying God to save Jesus from the Roman soldiers, and to save Jerusalem and the Jewish people from all their sorrows, which had never seemed so heavy as at this hour. And with every moment the sky grew darker, and a piercing wind blew from the hills, and dark birds of evil omen flew across the sky above their heads.

But there was one woman who followed Jesus at this hour whose grief was voiceless—his mother. Mary uttered no cry as she saw her son led forth to die. The wailing of the other women she scarcely heard; she did not see the black clouds which shut out the sky, nor the dark birds that flew overhead. She saw only the face of her son, as he turned and gazed at her. In his eyes was a far-away look, as if he were already with the Father whose messenger he was upon the earth.

Since the hour when Mary had learned of her son's arrest, her spirit had been with his. She had come up to Jerusalem this last time, feeling that some terrible thing would happen there. For she had read the prophecies, and Jesus himself had prepared her for the trial that was in store. She had known that Jesus *must* die at the hands of his enemies, as the prophets had foretold. But only now, when the hour of his suffering was come, did she realise all that it meant to be the mother of the Christ. When the annunciation angel had appeared to her in her little room so long ago, to tell her that she had been chosen by God to bring the Messiah into the world, he had not told her of this day.

The tender ministrations of Mary Magdalene and of

Salome, the mother of James and John, could bring no solace to her now. Even the thought of God's love could not comfort her—when her beloved son, whom she had gazed upon with wonder when he was a little baby, and had fled with into Egypt, and had seen grow into the splendid man whom thousands followed and worshipped, was going to die the horrible death of the cross. There are some griefs which words cannot describe, some scenes that no one *dares* to picture; and each heart must search in its own deep places for a consciousness of what Mary felt.

But that other Mary, she of Magdala, who had been a sinner, and who afterward became a saint, followed her Master with tears and heartbroken cries. *He* had believed in her when no one else in all the world had known that she was good. He had freed her from the seven devils of as many sins, and had placed her in the company of his disciples, where all were pure and good, and where the dream of the kingdom of heaven had driven away all desire for the splendour of the kingdoms of this world. To this Mary it seemed as if God Himself were to disappear from the earth with the passing away of Jesus. He had told her of the Comforter—the Holy Spirit—whom he would send when he was gone, even as he had told his men disciples; but she did not think of that now. Mary Magdalene had seen crucifixions in Jerusalem before, and she could feel already in her own hands and feet the cruel nails which soon would pierce the hands and feet of her Master.

And Salome, who walked with the mother and with Mary Magdalene, wept and beat her breast. She who had asked Jesus to grant that her two sons might sit, the one on his right hand, and the other on his left in the kingdom of heaven, had now forgotten even those two loved sons. She had seen the face of John in the distance, as

he, too, followed the Master to Golgotha; but Salome did not even beckon to him. She thought of nothing but Jesus, who had been so good to her.

They came to the place that was called Golgotha, which means "a skull." It was a bare and desolate hill, outside Jerusalem, but near the walls of the city.

The Roman soldiers commanded a halt. The three heavy crosses slipped from the shoulders of the two thieves and Simon of Cyrene. The hour was come. The soldiers first lifted the crosses into place, and drove them securely into the ground. They were low crosses, shaped in the form of the letter T. When a man was to be crucified, he was lifted up and nailed to this instrument of torture, and as he hung there, his feet were raised only a little way above the ground.

When the crosses were in place, the soldiers offered to the three condemned men a highly intoxicating drink, of vinegar and gall. This was intended to dull their sensibilities, that they might not suffer more than was necessary. The two thieves drank the vinegar and gall; but when a soldier raised the cup to the lips of Jesus, he would not drink of it. He preferred to die with his mind clear, to go into the immediate presence of his Father with soul and spirit free.

The Gospels do not tell us whether Jesus was nailed to the cross before the two thieves, or after them. If he saw them suffer first, it only made his martyrdom more terrible, because of his great pity for mankind. We are told only that the thieves were crucified, one on the right hand of Jesus and the other on his left.

The four soldiers came to Jesus. They took away his clothes. They lifted him upon the cross. They drove sharp nails through his hands, and sharp nails through his feet. His blood dripped down to the ground.

Jesus did not cry out; but as the soldiers drove the nails through his tender flesh, he raised his eyes to heaven and uttered the most sublime words ever spoken:

"Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."

For nearly nineteen hundred years those words have rung in the ears of all those who have tried to live like Jesus. They only can understand them who have been betrayed and tortured, in body or in mind. We may not be able to comprehend all that was in the heart of Jesus as he uttered that prayer; but we can remember it when some one makes us suffer. And it may be that when any one is cruel beyond our comprehension, as were those soldiers who nailed Jesus to the cross, it is always because, as the Master said, they know not what they do. For if they fully realised the cruelty of their action, they could not do it. It seems to us that the spirit of revenge which burns in lesser minds would be stricken powerless and ashamed, if the injured one in his hour of anger could call to mind that prayer: "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."

The mother and the other women knelt at the foot of the cross. John also was there now. The groans of the crucified thieves were terrible to hear. The sky grew blacker and blacker, as if the clouds were anxious to shut out all light from Jerusalem and those who dwelt therein. The sobs of Mary Magdalene and of Salome were less pitiful than the silence of the mother, as she knelt there watching her son.

But the Roman soldiers were not thinking of the mother, nor even of the sufferings of the Master upon the cross. They were thinking of the garments of Jesus, which, according to the Roman custom, became the property of the soldiers who crucified him. They divided

his smaller clothing into four lots, one for each soldier, and then they took up his coat. John tells us that it was a coat without seam, woven in one piece throughout. As a garment, it could belong only to one of the four soldiers, and they argued as to what they should do with it, each man desiring it for himself. Then one of them said:

“Let us not rend it, but cast lots for it.”

The other soldiers agreed, and sitting on the ground at the foot of the cross, they cast lots for the seamless coat of the crucified Master. The soldier who won the garment shouted in triumph, for greed could not even give place to the conclusion of their terrible business, but must come first.

When they had finished the division of his garments, they put up on the cross above the head of Jesus a placard which Pontius Pilate had written in three languages, in Hebrew, in Latin, and in Greek:

JESUS OF NAZARETH THE KING
OF THE JEWS.

Then the soldiers sat down again not far from the cross, and watched the Master. They laughed and joked among themselves, telling stories to pass the time.

And the priests and scribes and elders, with other Jews, walked to and fro before the cross, wagging their heads at the Master and reviling him:

“Thou that destroyest the Temple, and buildest it in three days, save thyself. If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross.”

The chief priests said:

“He saved others; himself he cannot save. If he be

the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him."

And others said:

"He trusted in God; let him deliver him now, if he will have him: for he said, I am the Son of God."

One of the two thieves who were crucified with Jesus cast the same in his teeth, even silencing his groans to mock at the Master:

"If thou be Christ, save thyself and us."

But the other thief, stretching forward his head, and looking across the form of Jesus to that of his fellow malefactor, rebuked him, saying:

"Dost thou not fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss."

Then, with a look which made his pain-distorted face seem almost gentle, he turned to the Master who was hanging beside him, and said:

"Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom."

Jesus answered:

"Verily I say unto thee, To-day thou shalt be with me in paradise."

The second thief did not even groan for a time; his mind was so absorbed that he hardly noticed the sting of the flies which lit upon his mangled hands. "To-day thou shalt be with me in paradise," he repeated to himself. Was it possible? He thought of all the sins he had committed in his life, and was sincerely sorry for them.

But there was one thing which troubled the Jews even now, when the Master whom they hated was crucified between two thieves and was dying before their eyes. To

the triumph of evil there is always something lacking. That trouble was the inscription which Pontius Pilate had caused to be put up over the head of the Master: "Jesus of Nazareth the King of the Jews." The chief priests went back into the city and sought the Roman governor, where he waited in that judgment hall which had now become more hateful to him than ever, because of the weight that was on his conscience. And the chief priests said to Pilate:

"Write not, The King of the Jews; but that he said, I am King of the Jews."

This made Pilate angry. Were they not content, these terrible priests, when he had condemned and crucified an innocent man to satisfy their malice and their bigotry, but they must now come to him complaining of such a petty thing as an inscription? And he answered them, briefly and sharply:

"What I have written I have written."

And the chief priests, seeing that they could get nothing more out of the Roman governor, reluctantly went back to the scene of the crucifixion.

To the mother and those other faithful souls who watched at the foot of the cross, the passing minutes seemed endless. Darker and darker grew the sky. Mary Magdalene and Salome had wept until they could weep no more. It seemed to John that he had already become an old man, so tremulous was his whole body; yet he supported with his arm the weary form of the mother of Jesus.

The Master, looking down from the cross and seeing his mother with John, said to her:

"Woman, behold thy son!"

Then, to the pale-faced disciple, he said:

"Behold thy mother!"

The heart of John rushed forth in love for the stricken

mother of the Master who so trusted him. Henceforth she should be indeed as his own mother, and he as a son to her. No more should she be homeless; but he would take her to his own house and care for her as long as she should live.

Jesus had now passed three hours in the torture of the cross. Though he had been nearly silent, he had suffered even more than the groaning thieves. It seemed to him that the Father in heaven had forgotten His son. And in his agony he cried:

“Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?—My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?”

This cry of her son was almost more than the mother could endure, and the tears of Mary Magdalene flowed afresh. The thought pierced their hearts that if he could really feel that God had forsaken him, how terribly must he suffer! They gazed at his pale face in an agony of love and pity.

But some of those who stood by, when they heard Jesus cry out, said:

“This man calleth on Elias.”

Straightway one of them ran and took a sponge, and put it on a reed, and filled it with vinegar, and lifted it to the lips of Jesus as he hung upon the cross, that his thirst might be assuaged. For a burning thirst was one of the horrors of crucifixion. But others who stood by said to this kinder-hearted man:

“Let be, let us see whether Elias will come to comfort him.”

When Jesus had received the vinegar, he cried again in a loud voice:

“It is finished.”

Those who watched, saw his head fall forward, and they knew that he was dead.

The sublime and fearless spirit of Jesus had gone to rejoin the Father whom he worshipped. No longer would the dark world be lighted by his presence as a man among men; no longer would his smile and his voice bring happiness to those who were sad, nor his gentle touch ease the sufferings of those in bodily pain. The peaceful ways of Galilee would not see him any more, nor the selfish city of Jerusalem be troubled by his lofty purity, which had been a reproach to its base selfishness. His disciples could no longer lean upon his breast, nor come to him for counsel. The labour of his life was finished, and the sweetness of it was now but a memory.

But the death of pain which he had chosen to die was the final seal upon his immortality as an influence among men. The crown of thorns upon his head would thereafter be a more royal emblem than the crowns of empire or the laurel wreaths of genius. Alone and unrivalled in the hearts of men, he would stand forever as marking the loftiest height to which humanity had reached or ever could reach. Forever the souls of men would turn to him as the still living Christ, the invisible and never-sleeping presence, whose love would be all-embracing, whose pity could reach even to the forgiveness of his torturers, whose understanding could embrace the highest and the lowest among human beings. The hearts of kings and of beggars would lean upon him, as his disciples had leaned; and his name would become the greatest power upon the lips of men, hushing into silence all thoughts and words unworthy, calling to activity all aspirations which lead men toward the spiritual life—the life beyond the joys of the world and beyond the shadows of the tomb.

We are told in the Gospels that at the moment of the death of Jesus, the veil of the great Temple at Jerusalem was rent from the top to the bottom—though no hand

touched it; that an earthquake shook the ground, and that great rocks were rent.

When the soldiers who had killed Jesus felt the ground shaken by the earthquake, they were frightened. And they said to one another, with pallid faces:

“Truly this was a righteous man!”

And those others who had come out from Jerusalem to see the crucifixion were appalled by the earthquake and by the darkness which covered the land. Their hearts quaked with fear, and they smote their breasts, and returned into the city. Even those who had mocked Jesus upon the cross were now silent, smitten dumb by a power they could not comprehend. We may suppose that men came running out to Golgotha from the city, to tell their friends in frightened whispers that the Temple veil was rent—though no hand had touched it.

After the earthquake a chill wind blew from the neighbouring hills, and other men came running, to say that they had seen the ghosts of the dead walking in Jerusalem. It was an hour of cold and terror; and still that lifeless and silently accusing figure hung there upon the cross.

As this was the evening of the great Jewish Passover, the most sacred festival in the year, the Jews had besought Pontius Pilate that their feast might not be troubled by the presence of those men upon the crosses; but that their legs might be broken, their death hastened, and their bodies taken away. And Pilate sent soldiers out from the city to do this grim work.

When they came to the two thieves they broke their legs, to hasten their death; but as Jesus seemed to be dead already, they did not break his legs. Instead, one of the soldiers took a spear and pierced the side of Jesus, and when they saw that blood and water ran from the

wound, they knew that the Master was dead. As the old prophets had foretold, not a bone of him was broken.

Now among the lesser disciples of Jesus, there was a rich man, Joseph of Arimathæa, who awaited the kingdom of heaven. When this man saw that Jesus was dead, he went to Pontius Pilate and asked that the body might be delivered to him. It was in accordance with the Roman law that the body of an executed man should be given to his friends, if they made that demand. Otherwise it was buried in a dishonoured place, set apart for the interment of dead felons.

During the life of Jesus, Joseph of Arimathæa had not proclaimed his discipleship, because he was afraid of the Jews; but when he saw the Master hanging there upon the cross, his love triumphed over the desire for honours among his own people, and he boldly sought the Roman governor, not caring who should know.

When Pontius Pilate was told that Jesus was already dead, at first he did not believe it. Men often lived for days upon the cross—sometimes until they died of starvation. Three hours seemed a short time. And Pilate called the centurion, who was in charge of the soldiers who had performed the execution, and demanded to know if the Master from Nazareth were really dead. When the centurion declared that it was true, Pilate gave permission that Joseph of Arimathæa should remove the body.

Nicodemus, who at first had come to the Master by night, was another highly placed friend of Jesus. When he learned that Pilate had given the body to Joseph, he brought a great quantity of myrrh and aloes for embalming. And Joseph, when he returned to Golgotha, carried with him a clean linen sheet.

Tragedy brings out the hidden courage or the cowardice of men. These two, Nicodemus and Joseph of

Arimathæa, who had loved and served Jesus in secret, and had often saddened his heart by their lack of bravery, now when their courage and loyalty could do him no real good, were both courageous and loyal. They stood at the foot of the cross, with John and Mary the mother, with Salome and Mary Magdalene, and probably also a few of the other disciples, and prepared to take down the body of their Master.

The descent from the cross has been the subject of many a masterpiece of painting, and words cannot picture it as lines and colours can. These friends drew out the cruel nails which had held the hands and feet of Jesus, and taking his body gently in their arms, they laid it upon the ground. One writer tells us that John hid the nails, that the sight of them might not cause keener suffering to the mother. Another writer says that as they removed the nails and the bleeding hands of Jesus hung down, the mother took them in her own, and kissed them yearningly. In a picture by Rubens, the great Flemish painter, the mother gently removes a thorn from the wounded brow of her dead son. These little touches of human tenderness move the heart to tears.

Poor mother! Be comforted now, for your son is not suffering any more. His spirit has escaped from the cruelty of the world, and that brief agony upon the cross has bought for him an eternity of love which his mere teachings, however beautiful, could never have stirred in the slow hearts of men.

With tender hands, half hidden from their own sight by falling tears, these friends wrapped the body of Jesus in the linen sheet, with the sweet-smelling myrrh and aloes. There was a garden near Golgotha, in which was a tomb newly cut out of the rock, and to this resting-place they bore the lifeless form of him whom they had loved.

The night was drawing on, it was near the hour of the Passover, and they were obliged to work quickly.

When they had laid the body in the tomb, they rolled a great stone to the mouth of it; then the men went sadly away. But Mary Magdalene and one of the other women remained, sitting over against the sepulchre.

As the twilight deepened into night, and as the few travellers upon the road hurried toward Jerusalem, they saw those two motionless figures, watching in silence at the door of the tomb.

CHAPTER XXXVI

THE RESURRECTION

After Jesus had been laid in the sepulchre, the chief priests and the Pharisees met together to congratulate one another upon his death. Their hearts were lighter than they had been for many months. So long as Jesus lived, they had felt that their position and their influence among the people were in constant danger; but now that he was dead, and safely put away in the tomb, they could breathe freely. Yet even now there was one thing which made them anxious—for they were hard to satisfy, these priests and Pharisees of Jerusalem, as Pontius Pilate had already learned to his great cost. And the next morning after the death of Jesus they sought the Roman governor again, and said to him:

“Sir, we remember that that deceiver said, while he was yet alive, After three days I will rise again. Command therefore that the sepulchre be made sure until the third day, lest his disciples come by night, and steal him away, and say unto the people, He is risen from the dead: so the last error shall be worse than the first.”

Pilate had slept badly the previous night, and there were dark circles around his eyes this morning. Though he had not actually seen Jesus upon the cross, all the long night his imagination had pictured him there, and a restless conscience had made his luxurious bed seem like a nest of thistles. His wife, too, had troubled him with the narration of her strange dream, about which she had

sent a messenger to tell him the day before, while he sat in the hall of judgment. So that now, when the priests and Pharisees came to him with their unnecessary request, Pilate answered them very briefly:

"Ye have a watch: go your way, make it as sure as ye can."

Thus armed with the authority of the governor, the Jews left the council-chamber, and went again to the sepulchre where Jesus had been laid. And they sealed the stone which formed the door of the tomb, and set watchmen to guard it day and night.

Then they went back to their homes, to enjoy the Sabbath, telling each other with a great wagging of heads that the promised resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth had now been made impossible.

The friends of Jesus spent that Sabbath in sadness and in prayer. The world was very different for them, now that Jesus was no more. They were bewildered. The events of the last two days had left them exhausted in body and in spirit. They had already learned of the suicide of Judas Iscariot, which added another horror to their burdened hearts; for though they now knew that Judas was a traitor, yet he had been their companion for a long time, and they could not think unmoved of his tragic end.

The disciples had been widely scattered after the arrest of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane, and only a few of them had even seen the crucifixion; but on the Sabbath day they had come together again, and had found temporary shelter in the house of a sympathiser in Jerusalem.

They were still afraid for their own lives, because they did not know how far the hatred of the Jews would carry them. The priests, having caused the Master to be killed, might now desire to do away with his disciples, that there

should be no one left upon the earth to carry on the work of Jesus. As the men from Galilee huddled together in that room in Jerusalem, they made fast the door, that no one should come and take them unawares.

All that Sabbath day John had been obliged to answer the questions of his fellow disciples, who had not been with Jesus at the crucifixion, or had only seen it from a distance.

But when they asked him what they should do in the future, John could not tell them, for he was but little wiser than they. Simon Peter was very silent, for he was still bowed with shame for that scene in the hall of the high priest's palace, when he had thrice denied his Master. Others might forgive him, but he could not forgive himself.

Mary Magdalene was heartbroken. She had watched the night before at the sepulchre of Jesus, and yet she could not rest this day. "The Master is dead! The Master is dead!" kept ringing in her bewildered brain. What was there left in life for her? she asked herself over and over. Where could she go for comfort?

Early in the morning of the first day of the week, she went back to the sepulchre of Jesus, taking with her one of the other women. It seemed to her now that the tomb of the Master was the only home she had in all the world, and she wished that she herself were dead.

As Mary came near to the sepulchre, the earth shook beneath her feet. She saw a great angel come down from heaven and roll away the stone from the door of the sepulchre. His countenance was like the lightning, and his garments were white as snow.

The watchmen whom the priests had left to guard the tomb were terrified at the appearance of the angel. In their fear they fell to the ground like dead men.

The angel said to Mary and her companion:

"Fear ye not: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified. He is not here: for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay. And go quickly and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead; and, behold, he goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see him: lo, I have told you."

The two women looked into the tomb and saw that it was empty—the body of Jesus was gone. Then they went quickly away, their hearts full of fear and wonder. And Mary ran back into the city and found John and Peter; and she said to them, her eyes aflame with excitement:

"They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre, and we know not where they have laid him." For even now she did not understand that he was really arisen from the dead.

Then Peter and John started running for the tomb. But John was younger and swifter of foot than his friend, and he reached there first. Stooping down, he looked into the tomb, and saw the linen garments lying on the rock floor. But he did not go in.

When Peter came, he went into the sepulchre, and saw the linen garments lying there, and the napkin, that had been about the Master's head, not lying with the linen clothes, but wrapped together in a place by itself.

John also went into the tomb now; and though he did not know the scripture which prophesied that Jesus should rise again from the dead, yet when he saw the empty sepulchre and the discarded linen garments, he believed that Christ was risen.

Peter and John did not see the angel which had appeared to Mary Magdalene, and when they had satisfied themselves that the sepulchre was really empty, they went

back together into the city to the house where they were staying.

But Mary Magdalene remained at the tomb, weeping. She did not understand what had happened. She was confused with fear, and hope, and sorrow. So long as she had known that the form of the Master was in the sepulchre, that melancholy spot had been the focus of all her thoughts; but now that he was there no more, it seemed to Mary that she herself had no longer an abiding place upon the earth.

As she wept, she stooped down and looked into the sepulchre, and there she saw two other angels, one sitting at the head, and the other at the foot of the place where Jesus had lain. Their faces were shining and beautiful, and joy seemed to surround them. They said to Mary:

“Woman, why weepest thou?”

And Mary answered:

“Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him.”

When Mary had said this, she turned herself back, away from the sepulchre, and there before her in the grey dawnlight she saw the form of a man. And he said to her:

“Woman, why weepest thou? Whom seekest thou?”

Mary supposed this figure to be that of the gardener, for the sepulchre was in a garden, and she answered him:

“Sir, if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away.”

“*Mary!*” said the thrilling voice of the Master.

And then she recognised him. Her heart leaped, and she was filled with a joy so great that it hurt her.

“Rabboni, Master!” she cried, and throwing herself upon the ground before him, she would have clasped and kissed his feet. But he said gently:

"Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God."

Then he vanished from her sight, but the joy of his presence remained with Mary.

"He is risen! He is risen!" she cried over and over in her happiness. The world was no longer a desolate place, and the air seemed full of unseen angels. The little birds that sang in the dawn were like the choristers of heaven.

Mary ran back into the city. She went to the house where the men disciples were, and told them that she had seen the risen Jesus, that he had spoken to her, and she repeated his words. But the disciples, though they believed in Mary, did not fully believe her story. They thought that grief and sleeplessness had unhinged her brain.

In the palace of the high priest there was excitement and anxiety. The watchmen at the sepulchre, who had been smitten senseless with terror at the appearance of the angel, had hurried back into the city, and had sought the chief priests, to whom they had told their story.

The priests immediately called a council of the elders, to consider what should be done. They were all of one mind that the soldiers of the watch must be bribed to say that the disciples of Jesus had come by night, while they slept, and had stolen away the body. And the priests gave money to the soldiers of the watch, instructing them carefully as to what they should tell the people, and promising them that if the story came to the ears of Pontius Pilate, the governor, the priests would themselves persuade him that what the watchmen said was true.

So the soldiers took the money which the priests offered

them, and immediately went about the city telling every one whom they met that the disciples of Jesus had come to the sepulchre by night, and had stolen away the body of the crucified man.

That night the disciples were assembled in their room in Jerusalem. The doors were still fastened, for fear of the Jews. Though they had not really believed the story of Mary Magdalene that she had seen the risen Christ that morning and that he had talked with her, yet they had been much excited by her own belief in the truth of what she said. Could it be possible? they asked themselves and one another. As the body of the Master was no longer in the tomb, where was it? And where was he? A strange restlessness possessed the disciples. The last few days had been so full of terrible events, and the next few days were so uncertain! They knew not what an hour might bring forth. They had heard of the rumours which the soldiers of the watch had spread about the city—that the disciples of Jesus had stolen his body from the tomb. Would the high priests now seek to punish them for what they had *not* done?

They sat bowed forward, staring into space. Not a sound disturbed the stillness of the chamber. The one lamp cast flickering shadows upon the wall.

Suddenly they felt the thrilling presence of something invisible. Not a man had moved from his place, the door was still securely fastened, and yet they felt that *something* had entered the room. They looked up quickly, their hearts pounding in their breasts.

Jesus stood there among them. His eyes shone with a light that was not of this earth.

"Peace be unto you," he said.

The disciples were terrified, for they thought that they

saw a spirit. And they huddled together, staring at Jesus with wide eyes of fear. But the Master said to them, in his own calm voice:

“Why are ye troubled? and why do thoughts arise in your hearts? Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have.”

And he stretched out to them his pierced hands, and showed them his torn feet, and his wounded side. And while they yet believed not for joy at seeing him again, and wondered how such a thing could really be, he said to them:

“Have ye here any meat?”

And they gave him a piece of a boiled fish, and a piece of honeycomb; and he took the food and ate before them. Then they were less afraid, for it seemed to them now that it was really the Master, and not his spirit which stood there. And he said to them:

“These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me.”

Then by his power he opened their understanding, and made them realise that all the terrible things which they had witnessed and suffered had been a part of God’s plan regarding His Son, that the heart of the world might be touched. And Jesus said:

“Thus it is written, and thus it behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And ye are witnesses of these things.”

Then he told them that he sent the promise of his Father unto them—the Comforter, the Holy Spirit—but

that they should tarry in Jerusalem a while longer, until they should receive power from on high. And he said:

"Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you."

When he had spoken these words, he breathed on them, one man after another, saying:

"Receive ye the Holy Ghost!"

As they felt his breath, it seemed as if a new spirit entered into them—a spirit of power and understanding. They were changed in some mysterious way. They were still themselves, and yet they seemed also to be a part of him. Their eyes shone with a more brilliant light, for they had indeed received the Holy Spirit. And Jesus said to them:

"Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.

"He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.

"And these signs shall follow them that believe: In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover."

Then Jesus moved toward the door of the chamber, beckoning his disciples to follow. When he had first appeared, it had seemed to them that they were dreaming; but now they were keenly alert, and full of vivid life. For had not Jesus breathed upon them the power of the Holy Spirit? They felt strong enough to move the world.

The Master led them out of the city, talking sweetly along the way. He did not lead them to Golgotha, nor yet to the great Temple, but to Bethany, on the hill beyond the city—Bethany, the little town where he had been so happy with his friends in the days that were no more.

Of all the incidents recorded in the Gospels, there is none more touching than this. Even in his new life, Jesus had not forgotten the affections of the old.

As they looked at him in the soft starlight, he seemed exactly the same as he had been before. And the disciples marvelled.

When they reached Bethany, and stood again among the olive-trees, Jesus lifted up his hands and blessed them—and then he disappeared from their sight.

The quiet stars still shone overhead, the breeze blew softly through the olive-trees, but the Master was no longer there. They peered into the shadows of the night, but saw nothing. Then with hearts athrill with hope, and lips hushed with awe, they turned again toward Jerusalem and entered into the city by the way they had come.

Thomas, that disciple who was always doubtful of what he had not seen with his own eyes, was not with the others that night. And when the disciples told him afterward that they had seen the Lord, that Jesus had eaten before them, had shown them his wounded hands and feet and side, had breathed upon them with the Holy Spirit, and had walked with them to Bethany, Thomas did not believe. He said:

“Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe.”

But eight days later Thomas himself saw Jesus. The disciples, after the Master had breathed upon them with the Holy Spirit, had ceased to be afraid of the Jews, and they went about the city freely, even teaching in the Temple. And one night when they were all assembled in their chamber in Jerusalem, and Thomas with them, Jesus came again and stood in the room, saying:

"Peace be unto you."

Then said he to Thomas:

"Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side; and, be not faithless, but believing."

"My Lord and my God!" answered Thomas, for all his doubts were flown away. He, too, had beheld the risen Christ, and was now ready for his mission of apostleship.

Jesus said to him:

"Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed."

Many other things Jesus did in the presence of his disciples during the forty days that he remained near them in his risen body. After they had left Jerusalem, and had gone back into the north, they saw him again in Galilee, at the Lake of Tiberias.

Peter, Thomas, Nathanael, James and John, and two of the other disciples, had been fishing at night from a boat on the lake, but they had caught nothing. And in the morning Jesus stood upon the shore.

"My children," he said, "have ye any meat?"

They answered him, "No."

He told them to cast the fish-net from the right side of the boat, and they should find fishes; and when they had cast the net as Jesus told them, they were not able to raise it out of the water for the multitude they had caught.

The other disciples who were on the shore came to help them, and when they had dragged the net ashore, they counted one hundred and fifty-three great fishes—yet the net was not broken.

And they found on the shore a fire of coals, and fish was laid thereon and bread, and Jesus said to them: "Come and dine."

And he gave them bread and fish, and they all ate together there on the shore of the lake. The disciples were filled with joy to see the Master again, and their hearts were touched because he had helped them in one of the little and material ways of life. There was never any thing distant about Jesus. His intimacy with those who loved him was the secret of his greatest power.

After they had eaten together, Jesus said to Simon Peter:

"Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these?"

"Yea, Lord, thou knowest that I love thee," answered Peter.

Jesus said to him:

"Feed my lambs."

And Jesus said to Peter a second time:

"Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?"

"Yea, Lord," answered Peter again, "thou knowest that I love thee."

"Feed my sheep," replied Jesus.

Then he said to Peter a third time:

"Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?"

Peter was grieved because Jesus had asked him three times if he loved him. Did not the Master understand his heart? And Peter said:

"Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee."

With a radiant smile Jesus said to him again:

"Feed my sheep." Then he added:

"Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdest thyself, and walkest whither thou

wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not."

By this Jesus meant Peter to understand by what death he should die. And when the Master had spoken thus, he said to Peter:

"Follow me."

Peter looked at John, who was near Jesus at that moment, and he asked:

"Lord, and what shall this man do?"

"If I will that he tarry till I come," replied Jesus, "what is that to thee? Follow thou me."

From that day the saying went abroad among the followers of Jesus that John should not die until the second coming of the Christ. But Jesus had not really said so.

During this talk with Peter, the Master had not referred by word or look to the disciple's denial of him that terrible night in the hall of the high priest's palace. It was Jesus who taught us to forgive our friends—even their disloyalty.

The Master now said to the disciples who were assembled there on the shore of the lake:

"All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."

When he had spoken these words, and while they still gazed at him, he was lifted up into heaven, and a cloud received him out of their sight.

And from that hour, as long as they lived, the disciples went about the world, preaching the religion of

Jesus. Almost everywhere they met with persecution, and many of them died the death of martyrs; but their faith never faltered. It is owing to their labours, and to the labours of Paul, who later became one of their number, that the world was Christianised, and that millions on millions of men and women came to love Jesus almost as much as his disciples loved him.

For he was always to them the *Living Christ*, the friend more intimate than father or mother, the invisible companion ready at all times and seasons to come at the call of those who needed his love. And so he has remained until this day—the *Living Christ*.

THE END

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